



China Perspectives

A NEW EXPLORATION OF HEGEL'S DIALECTICS I

ORIGIN AND BEGINNING

Deng Xiaomang



A New Exploration of Hegel's Dialectics I

This volume reinterprets Hegelian dialectics via an exploration of the two origins of dialectics and illuminates how they constitute the inner tension at the heart of the philosophical system, developing into the forms of thought that fashion the history of Western philosophy.

As the first volume of a three-volume set that gives insights into Hegel's dialectics and thereby his overall philosophical thought, the book considers the linguistics spirit of *logos* and the existentialist spirit of *nous* in Greek philosophy as the two origins of Hegelian dialectics. The author argues that the two spirits form a dialectical unity of opposites and constitute the inner tension at the heart of the belief system. Based on this tension, this volume explains Hegel's problem of beginning that has the sense composed of both the starting point of logic and that of consciousness. Beginning in this two-fold sense shapes dimensions of his methodology: immediacy and mediacy, the path of doubt and the path of truth, the linguistics lever and the existential lever.

The title will appeal to scholars and students interested in Hegel and Marx's philosophy, German classical philosophy and Western philosophy.

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Origin and Beginning

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This book is published with financial support from the Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

First published in English 2022

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Translated by Wu Lihuan and Chad Austin Meyers

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English Version by permission of The Commercial Press, Ltd.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Deng, Xiaomang, author. | Wu, Lihuan, translator. |

Meyers, Chad Austin, translator.

Title: A New Exploration of Hegel's Dialectics I: Origin and Beginning /

Xiaomang Deng; [translated by Wu Lihuan and Chad Austin Meyers]

Other titles: Si bian de zhang li. English

Description: New York, New York: Routledge, 2022. | Series: China perspectives |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021046264 (print) | LCCN 2021046265 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781032217383 (v. 1; hardback) | ISBN 9781032217444 (v. 1; paperback) |

ISBN 9781032217390 (v. 2; hardback) | ISBN 9781032217451 (v. 2; paperback) |

ISBN 9781032217406 (v. 3; hardback) | ISBN 9781032217468 (v. 3; paperback) |

ISBN 9781032217369 (hardback) | ISBN 9781032217376 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781003269809 (v. 1; ebook) | ISBN 9781003269816 (v. 2; ebook) |

ISBN 9781003269830 (v. 3; ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1770–1831. | Dialectic.

Classification: LCC B2949.D5 D4613 2022 (print) |

LCC B2949.D5 (ebook) | DDC 193–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021046264>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021046265>

ISBN: 978-1-032-21738-3 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-21744-4 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-26980-9 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003269809

Typeset in Times New Roman

by Newgen Publishing UK

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Part I

The two origins of Hegel's dialectic

When G.W.F. Hegel's dialectic first appeared on the stage of modern European thought, it appeared as a wonder, an earthquake, an anomalous sign that fell from Heaven, for the German people and for the entire Western world of thought, which, at that juncture, considered itself as having reached the peak of human civilization. People struggled to grasp it, primarily in terms of its actual influence upon their real lives rather than to understand its theoretical origin. People saw Hegel as a genius. Since this genius had already self-consciously summarized the entire history of philosophy as the historical development of his own thought, his loyal followers did not need to spend time discussing the origins of his thought from the sidelines; rather, all they needed to do was immerse themselves in the atmosphere of his all-encompassing thought. On the other hand, more than half of those who opposed him regarded him with disdain and belittled him because they had adopted positions opposed to his and had never taken seriously his self-understanding of his own philosophy's origins from the perspective of the logical genesis of history that he himself had already brought into the open.

In some sense, the task of thoroughly sublating Hegel's philosophy still has not been fully accomplished. This not only refers to Karl Marx, who died before completing his planned book entitled "Dialectics," but also refers to both contemporary philosophy's inability to break free of Hegel's massive shadow and the periodic popularity Hegel still enjoys in contemporary philosophy. The rational core of the Hegelian dialectic still has powerful vitality. Aside from the pioneering force it has in each field of the human sciences, it still demands further exploration. In many settings, precisely at that point when we think ourselves already capable of using the magical force of this talisman, we do nothing more than extract the most superficial, shallow and lifeless external forms of it. Just as we have no way of truly understanding Marx without first having understood Hegel, we cannot deeply understand Hegel without having researched the history of Western philosophy, and especially without having probed deeply into the historical origin of the Hegelian dialectic, that is, ancient Greek dialectics. Martin Heidegger once said of Hegel with respect to the logical structure of his dialectic that he is "the most radical of the Greeks."¹ This is not only to say that we can find the historical

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basis of Hegel's dialectic in ancient Greek dialectical thought, but also that we find the most intrinsic and profound moment for understanding Hegel's dialectic through a close analysis of ancient dialectics as well as the necessity it produces, its mode of expression and the problems it encounters and aims to resolve.

Because of this, our exploration of the origins of Hegel's dialectic cannot simply be a historical journey tracing it back in the written materials of thought, but it must itself be based on some understanding of Hegel's dialectic, and also have the purpose of verifying and deepening this understanding, making it concrete. In this way, this part, where we discuss the origins of Hegel's dialectic, has especially important methodological significance, and the thought that it expresses and reveals will weave its way throughout the entire book. We may briefly state this thought beforehand (even though it still awaits demonstration) as follows: Hegel's dialectic has two origins in ancient Greece: one is what we would call the linguistic origin, which results in the *logos-ist*, rationalist and methodological tendencies in Hegel's dialectic; the other we could call the existentialist origin, which imparts the spirit of *nous* to Hegel's dialectic and renders it historicist and ontological. The first chapter discusses the linguistic origin.

Note

- 1 Gadamer 1976, 107.

1 The linguistic origin

The pursuit of language

As is widely known, what those philosophers of early ancient Greece mainly explored were questions of natural philosophy, which is to say the search to find in Nature that *arche*, or origin of all beings, that from which in Nature all things are generated and to which all things ultimately return. What the first Greek philosopher, Thales, found was “water.” His student Anaximander thought it was *apeiron* (ἄπειρον), namely “[that which is] boundless.” Anaximenes (Anaximander’s student) proposed “air” as the origin of all beings.

This complicated philosophical issue many interpretations and explanations by historians of philosophy. First, Thales’s thinking should be considered. Why did Thales regard “water” as the origin of the world? According to G.W.F. Hegel’s interpretation,

[t]his objective actuality is now to be raised into the Notion that reflects itself into itself and is itself to be set forth as Notion; in commencement this is seen in the world’s being manifested as water, or as a simple universal.¹

Hegel also pointed out the cultural source of this thought, “[the ancients] made Oceanus and Tethys the producers of all origination, and water [...] the oath of the gods.”² However, Hegel did not focus on discussing the formation of this proposition from the perspective of this cultural origin. In his view, the mere worship of water or the Ocean was still not enough to constitute a philosophy. What he put his focus on was rather what distinguishes this proposition from the traditional worship of Oceanus, which was the speculative philosophical quality that this proposition contains. That is to say, “water” for Thales was no longer water in the average sensuous meaning of the term. He rather used it as a universal principle that constructs an overarching generalization of this richly diverse and colorfully boundless world and that comes to override the mythological sense of “Oceanus” and steer through the actuality

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of the immanent world. Water formulates the principle of Nature, the condensation and rarefaction element *per se*.

To be sure, philosophy is only philosophy insofar as it transcends the individual characteristics of the finite sensuous world with the advancement of an all-encompassing concept of the world that could unfold to explain it. Precisely because of this, we view a philosophy as being a “worldview.” But Thales, as the first philosopher, still could not find the ready-made concept that could summarize a worldview. Thales found that, for the time being, he could satisfy the need to express this concept by characterizing it with one concrete sensuous thing, “water.” As a matter of convenience, water also lends well to standing in for the concept by virtue of its “fluidity.” Water can permeate and dissolve the sensuous qualities of so many particular things possessing form, yet without itself changing, and this is identical with the universal characteristic of the “concept.” Water is colorless, odorless and is of no definite shape. Water is perfectly simple in terms of sensuous qualities, and this approximates the abstract nature of the concept. Clearly, choosing “water” to be the *arche* of the world, whether Thales noticed it or not, was due to a certain necessity. If the ancient Greeks were to create a philosophy to grasp all of the messy phenomena of the boundless world, if they could only arbitrarily pick one among many sensuous materials and the society in which they lived also had strong ocean worship as the cultural foundation of their ideology, then we could almost say, even without Thales, any other philosopher’s prime choice would be to view water as the origin of all beings.

However, we are still not finished with this problem. Another even more universal problem is, even if water has the characteristics of greater simplicity and fluidity in the sensuous world, it is still ultimately a concrete sensuous material. How could it transcend the entire sensuous world and reach the level of philosophy’s universal Notion or at the very least direct people toward this while relying merely on its own sensuous characteristics? How could it become the starting point and ground for people to later unfold this new level of thought, and not be misunderstood as mythology or witchcraft? In brief, how could a sensuous thing be used as a universal principle? This is necessarily tied to a universal phenomenon in linguistics, that is, any substance word (*shici* 实词) (a word with concrete referent) is itself already a universal concept. Words act as a social medium of mutual communication and mutual understanding between people. Words are memory’s tools for reliable communication between the I of today and the I of yesterday. Words act as the safeguards of human beings’ coherence of thought, and there is already a distinction, even a mutual separation and to a certain extent a tendency of mutual opposition, between the word itself and the content and meaning it expresses. Even for the most concrete thing, for instance, when we point to a book and say “this,” what we utter is really something of the greatest abstraction and utmost universality (everything is a “this”). Hegel gives repeated illustrations of this characteristic of language in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He remarks “[w]e also *express* [in language] the sensuous as a universal.”³ It

is for this reason, in his view, language “itself has the divine nature of immediately inverting the meaning, then of making it into something else,”⁴ that is, into the universal.

We can see from this that in Thales, there is no unsurpassable barrier in principle to using a concrete sensuous thing to express a universal Notion, because what is involved here is not that sensuous thing itself but rather the word and concept of that thing. Thales just accomplishes raising the universality of this word itself (as a “universal”) to a higher philosophical level. This was of course a great, unprecedented undertaking, but it was not by any means totally groundless. It was rooted rather in the essence of language itself to grasp the particular and individual in the universal. Thales’s effort could be seen as that of pursuing a language, an effort to transcend everyday language and construct a philosophical language. This effort both succeeded and failed at the same time. It failed because “water” is ultimately the concept of a sensuous thing and does not possess that highest universality he gave to it, and it could not possibly have shouldered the mission of grasping the sensuous world that it was meant to undertake, so it was sublated by a further movement of thought. It was successful because this effort itself led to its own further sublation, for the reason that it indicated through its own intention a way of pursuing philosophical language and later philosophers continuously progressed along the pathway it pointed to. Therefore, this is a contradiction, that is, the contradiction of a word that is used to express a philosophical concept, the contradiction of mutual disagreement between the sensuous finitude of what it denotes (for instance, concrete “water”) and the universal mission that it undertakes (that is, becoming the origin of all beings). The development and movement of the entirety of early Greek natural philosophy could be considered effects of the continual growth of this intrinsic, basic contradiction in thought.

Anaximander’s philosophy proves precisely our analysis above. Historians, from Aristotle and Simplicius to Hegel himself and to the hermeneuticians of modern times, have not revealed the above-mentioned contradiction intrinsic to early ancient Greek philosophy. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel only elucidates such a crucial figure as Anaximander in four places, only slightly more often than he mentions a secondary figure such as Melissus, in the entire history of philosophy. Precisely because of this, Anaximander’s doctrine stood before them as an unsolvable riddle. According to the records, Anaximander called the origin of the world *apeiron*, but he did not give it any definitive explanation. Aristotle interprets it as saying an origin is an origin precisely because it is not derived from another origin; otherwise, it would not be an origin, but would rather be something limited, so a true origin can only be the unlimited, that is, the boundless.⁵ In this way, what this boundless something ultimately was became a complicated riddle. Aristotle seems to have intentionally avoided the qualifying specification of Anaximander’s *apeiron*. Simplicius held that the *apeiron* should be another unuttered boundless substrate aside from water and air. Diogenes Laërtius

pointed out that Anaximander did not refer to the *apeiron* as air, water or anything else, and Anicius held therefore that Anaximander is blameworthy.⁶ After examining the viewpoints of all of the pre-Socratic schools, Ye Xiushan insists that Anaximander did not propose something different from Thales's *arche*, and that his *apeiron* is only an attribute of "water."⁷ Conversely, Fan Mingsheng insists in *A History of Greek Philosophy* that the *apeiron* is not an attribute but a substance, which could be translated as "indeterminate substance" (*wudingti* 无定体).⁸ I hold that these interpretations cling excessively to historical data both reliable and unreliable, and simultaneously include later interpretations (for instance, strict distinctions between substance and attribute), but fail to grasp the regularity intrinsic to the contradiction that was developing in thought.

The strangest thing is, Hegel, who historically has been accused of using the needs of his own system subjectively to divide the history of philosophy, appears overly cautious about Anaximander. What he adopts is the so-called intermediate matter hypothesis, which is, he argues, based on one sentence from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (which does not explicitly refer to Anaximander) stating that Anaximander's *apeiron* is very likely "thicker than air and thinner than water."⁹ He seems not to have realized that the transition of thought from Thales to Anaximander runs perfectly parallel to the transition of the two categories from "something" to "nothing" in his own *Logic*. Because Anaximander's "boundless something" is a purely negative expression, it corresponds to the moment of "nothing." In fact, "boundless" is a negation of this material form of "water," but it is itself also a further determination of "water." Perhaps in Anaximander's view, the reason why Thales views water as the principle of all beings is mainly by virtue of water possessing the essential characteristic of "the boundless" (and not merely the "attribute"), or to use Hegel's preferred formulation: formlessness is the "Truth" of water. Even though, when discussing Thales's "water," Hegel says: "[n]ow simple essence [...] is that which is devoid of form [...],"¹⁰ he ultimately never thought of using this proposition to explain *apeiron*, which is frankly hard to believe.

Obviously, in Anaximander, water is essentially something entirely formless. Water, however, is not the only formless thing in the world. In the Greek conception, three of the four basic elements (water, fire, earth and air) aside from earth all have the "formless" characteristic. In addition, due to the level of thought people had at the time, it was still impossible to simply abstract "formless" from things as an abstract universal or "attribute" and make it the *arche* of all beings (this step was not made until Plato reached it with the Idea, and even "being" in Parmenides, who conceived of "being" as a circular "something," still could not reach this level). It is because of this that I insist that Anaximander's *apeiron* should, strictly speaking, be translated as "the formless," which is the general term for all formless things. I proposed such a viewpoint in Chen Xiuzhai's *Empiricism and Rationalism in the History of European Philosophy*.¹¹ Anything, as long as it is formless (whether it is water, fire, air or something else), is the *arche*. Anything becomes the *arche* not

because it is “that” something and not by virtue of its specific form, but rather by virtue of its formlessness. Anaximander’s formulation is unclear because, for the sake of drawing a clear boundary with the concrete qualities of sensible matter, he did not agree with merely considering water or air or something similar as the origin of the world, and he was even further from proposing a specific kind of formless matter (“boundless substance”) to replace matter like water and air. On the other hand, he also did not put “formless” in the place of the *arche* as a simple “attribute” or abstract universal. He remained faithful to his teacher’s simple belief and to that of the entirety of early natural philosophy in attempting to explain sensible Nature with sensible Nature itself. This is, of course, a major contradiction, which shows that, although Anaximander’s pursuit of philosophical language rose to a higher level than that reached by Thales, who is allegedly the first to have proposed this concept of *arche*. Considering his level of thought, this is believable. *Arche* and “the unlimited” are concepts belonging to the same level of abstraction, referring to “the origin,” but they are still constrained by the referent (the signified). That said, this contradiction became an understandable, “rational” contradiction after undergoing the above-mentioned interpretation and its transition to the next stage of thought, or Anaximenes’s “air,” became necessary as well.

The method by which Anaximenes resolved the aforementioned contradiction was, based on earlier natural philosophy, by selecting that which is most boundless among all boundless things, that is, “air,” to be the *arche* of all beings. Whereas Thales’s proposal of “water” came with some contingency from the standpoint of pure philosophical speculation and only appears to be necessary when simultaneously held in consideration with the specific cultural background of ancient Greece (Ocean worship), Anaximenes’s “air” could entirely be analyzed with respect to the logical evolution of thought. It was the next step of discovery that could only have been made based on Anaximander. Without this essential determination of *apeiron*, people could have only blindly picked this or that among various elements. Even if air were proposed, it would have meant the same thing as water and there would have been no way of truly sublating the determination of water, but now that air was something more “devoid of form” than water, air threw water behind it once and for all as it became a clearly established principle.

Saying that air is more devoid of form than water, and even saying that air is the most boundless thing, is not only said with reference to the natural physical characteristics of water and air, like saying air is invisible and intangible but is what causes the diversity of changes in Nature (like wind and lightning), but it is also said with reference to air having spiritual characteristics in the minds of ancient people. Hegel remarked that Anaximenes “seems to have understood [air] as endowed with soul [...],” “spirit and air are synonymous.”¹² Hegel equates “spirit” here with the Greek word *pneuma*, which in Greek means breath, vitality and soul. Of course, this by no means illustrates that Anaximenes was transitioning from natural philosophy to “the philosophy of consciousness.”¹³ Instead, it only illustrates

that when the ancients were seeking to express the origin of the world in philosophical language, they already began appealing to mental abstractions and supersensory characteristics, but they in principle still understood this abstract mind on equal footing with natural phenomena: what is that which is most devoid of form in Nature? It is air, and so it is the breath of vital spirit, soul and thought.

“Air” could be seen as a synthesis of Thales’s “water” (thesis) and Anaximander’s “the boundless” (antithesis), because air does not merely possess contingent determinacy like water does, nor is it merely a negative expression like “the boundless” and it does not locate a concrete “entity” that has lost determinacy. Formulated otherwise, air is both the clear expression of that essence which water expresses vaguely, and simultaneously also a natural “something” with a negative essence. We could view this syllogistic unfolding of thought as a “deduction,” and moreover, what Hegel called a necessary deduction, P-U-S, that is, particularity-universality-singularity.¹⁴ This progression shows early human philosophical thought’s pursuit of philosophical language unconsciously following the logical necessity of thought itself.

Now such a crucial moment has come: even though Anaximenes’s “air” did express the “boundless” characteristic of the *arche*, that of transcending all bounded things, this negative expression was still insufficient; it should also establish for this something, which is boundless for natural things, the specific determination (determinate form) by which it transcends nature, but the specification of air by itself as the determination of something that is still sensible nature could not possibly undertake this mission. Secondly, the boundless would still have to be used to explain the cause of all natural beings, but it actually only provides the passive material that is formed into all beings (what Aristotle calls “the material cause”), and it could not explain how it gives all beings “form” (“the formal cause”). These few early philosophers always explained the genesis and destruction of all beings with the consolidation and rarefaction of formless matter, but what causes the consolidation and rarefaction of such matter? This criticism of the Milesian school that something which is formless does not contain in itself the actuating cause that leads to the consolidation and rarefaction of itself was made by Aristotle in vol. 1, ch. 8 of *Metaphysics*. Hegel also cites this as evidence.¹⁵ Because of this, now the problem is not only how to break free of (negate) the sensible world (the boundless), but is moreover how to establish philosophy’s own world of categories and concepts, how to establish the determinate form of a common universal, the determination of a Concept.

In this way, the Pythagoreans accomplished a leap in expressing the origin of the world. Aristotle remarks that the Pythagoreans “got the principle from non-sensible things,” [...] “[b]ut the causes and the principles which they mention are, as we said, sufficient to act as steps even up to the higher realms of reality.”¹⁶ This [principle] is what they call “numbers.” Numbers are abstract forms, but for individual sensible things, they are boundless: “one” is not one head of oxen, “two” is not two apples. They are all unlimited and universal,

but at the level of abstract thought, they are also eternally unchanging and the most determinate. They are the “measures” of a precise science (quantitative analysis). That the Pythagorean school’s first of “the ten pairings” was that of “the finite” and “the infinite,” was not by chance. The first Chinese philosopher to analyze this segment of the history of philosophy from the perspective of the contradiction between the finite and the infinite was Ye Xiushan (for reference, see his *Research on Pre-Socratic Philosophy*). Although the finite in the Pythagorean school entered a higher level of abstraction in relation to sensuous qualitative diversity, it still could not break free of the sensuous world’s quantitative determination. The Pythagoreans also could not break into the conceptual level of philosophy in the qualitative sense, so they could only conceive of numbers as some points occupying and composing space or as “pebbles” or “shot.”¹⁷ Number or quantity can still be (and moreover must be) intuitively perceived through time and space. Numbers are not true concepts, but are merely intuitive representations. A true concept is always a quality and is not a pure and simple quantity, but numbers do provide the transition of breaking free of sensuous qualities and establishing the conceptual qualities of philosophy. This is manifested in two aspects: firstly, numbers contain the principle of “the one,” and all natural numbers are composed out of repetitive additions of the smallest unit, 1, which led to the principle of the Eleatic school (Parmenides). In addition, numbers are determined in certain relations. The Pythagoreans called these relations “harmonies” and “proportions,” and Heraclitus drew out from them the concepts of “measure,” “law” and most importantly, *logos*.

The founding of a philosophical language

In his history of philosophy, Hegel reverses the order out of the needs of his own system and places the later Eleatic school before Heraclitus. The reason for this was that “the one” of the Eleatic school, or the principle of being, was the logical beginning of philosophical thought, while Heraclitus represents “becoming” as this higher stage of thought. This order coincides with the beginning order (being, non-being, becoming) of his *Logic*. In fact, the thought of “becoming” emerged far earlier than the thought of “being” and “non-being,” “something” and “nothing” in the history of the genesis of human thought. The reason why the early Greek philosophers had sought an unchanging *arche* for the world was nothing other than for the sake of grasping the flux of all natural things. When Heraclitus says “[a]ll is flux,” he actually goes no further but on the contrary clearly expresses the thought which the Milesian school knew early on, that the so-called “boundless” things are nothing other than changing things and that things such as water and air are the most changeable. Prior to Heraclitus, all philosophical efforts were aimed at determining that which is changing, fixing it and grasping it in language and concepts. Even though in Hegel’s time “all is flux” amounted to a radically daring thought, because mechanistic physics and the traditional

theological worldview were what ruled over people's minds at the time, in the minds of the ancients, this was but a simple truth, which could be found vividly stated in the thoughts and cultures of all early peoples. Because of this, this move of placing "becoming" after the categories of being and non-being, and thinking that this amounts to an unconditionally higher stage of thought seems to reveal some sort of objective that Hegel had. When rebutting this reversal in Hegel, Fan Mingsheng asserts: "[a]ctually human thought does not begin with the abstract, but instead begins with the concrete."¹⁸ Yet this does not quite hit the mark, because in Hegel the conceptually most "abstract" thing is precisely the most "concrete" thing in representation.

Heraclitus however did indeed have his great contribution, which was not proposing a pure "flux" to act as a philosophical term (which was of course not meaningless), but more importantly it was his concrete elucidation and understanding of this "flux" triggering a historical turning point. At first sight, Heraclitus considering flux to be the principle of "fire" as the *arche* of all beings was no different from the past move of considering "boundless" to be the principle of water and air, which was still using sensible nature to explain sensible nature. Closer examination, however, reveals the essential difference between Heraclitus and the Milesian school. He no longer went out in pursuit of a "boundless something" to play the role of the origin of the world (in this respect, Anaximenes's "air" already reached this point). What he sought was a something that is both boundless and yet also capable of forming itself and forming other things in order to overcome this very flaw in the Milesian school that lacked the ability to explain the cause of flux in all things. This something in Nature could only be fire. Fire is the intrinsic unity of bounded and boundless. Because of this, compared with "the boundless" in the Milesian school, Heraclitus's understanding of "becoming" is no longer that of a blind and passive plasticity requiring external force to shape it, but is rather actively shaping and creating itself. It has its own law, rule or measure. "This world, the same for all, neither any of the gods nor any man has made, but it always was, *and is*, and shall be, an ever-living fire, kindled in due measure, and in due measure extinguished."¹⁹ The distinguishing characteristic of fire is that it moves of itself (and thus moves all things). It can be seen as "becoming as such," so it is more similar to the human soul and active spirit than "air" is. The reason why fire can move of itself is because it possesses its own law and measure, its own metric of self-formation, which is what Heraclitus calls *logos*.

At the level of philosophical language, proposing *logos* was an event of far greater gravity than was proposing fire and flux. *Logos* is the law, the measure of changes; it is what does not change amid change. *Logos* is obviously a relation, but it is no longer an abstract numerical or quantitative relation. It is a qualitative relation. It is two qualitatively different or qualitatively opposed things unifying into a new quality, which is not the calm extension of two numbers adding up to a number on the same level of an identical quality, but is rather the vivid picture of the constant flux of the entire world's richly

diverse and overflowing struggle of contradictions. Among all of the unified relationships of opposites, the most basic and universal is the unity of being and non-being: “[i]nto the same river we both step and do not step. We both are and are not.”²⁰ There are also some people who have raised doubts about whether or not this fragment came from Heraclitus himself.²¹ It seems believable that it was not the Eleatics but Heraclitus who first introduced being and non-being into philosophical thought and viewed them as the two phases of becoming itself and their relationship as the law, measure and *logos* of becoming. Historically, being and non-being were parsed from the ancient Greek concept of becoming, which is to say, the concept of becoming was not derived through the synthesis of being and non-being. As Hans-Georg Gadamer puts it: “Thus Being and Nothing are more to be treated as analytic moments in the concept of Becoming.”²²

Heraclitus’s concept of *logos* ultimately evolved to mean “reason” precisely in this sense of measure and law. This process of evolution elicits much excitement. It first involves the etymology of the word *logos*, of which modern researchers have many different interpretations. G.S. Kirk holds that the root of *logos* is *leg* (λεγ), originally meaning to choose, to select, and by extension count, measure, ratio and law.²³ This interpretation of course assists in tracing back Heraclitus’s thought to Pythagoras’s mathematical principle and is particularly in line with the trend of scientism in contemporary philosophy. In some respects, this interpretation is not senseless, but it runs into Martin Heidegger’s fierce rebuttal. Heidegger points out that these interpretations that are restricted to the scientific scope of language usage come from the “concealment” of the original sense of *logos* ever since Plato and Aristotle.²⁴ Heidegger thus insists on the need to connect *logos* together with *légein* (to speak, to exhibit), in which case it expresses “to say” or “to exhibit” and simultaneously “that which is exhibited” (λεγ μενον). It is on the basis of this sense alone that *logos* can be understood as reason, ground and relationship.²⁵ Fan Mingsheng compiled the ten connotations of the word *logos* from *The Big Greek-English Dictionary* (*xiying dacidian* 希英大辞典) and W.K.C. Guthrie’s *A History of Greek Philosophy*.²⁶ At first sight, these connotations make the word *logos* appear complicated and confusing, but after closer analysis, one can still make out characteristics that all of these connotations share in common. In brief, there are two points: (1) It is a mental activity of humans; (2) It is not a purely subjective activity, but is rather an activity with an objective criterion, namely the activity of showing others and getting others to agree. Heraclitus insists many times that *logos* is something impersonal, something that everyone shares in common; *logos* is “one.” He even pleads: “It is wise for those who hear, not me, but the universal reason [*logos*], to confess that all things are one.”²⁷

Then what is this something that “has both subjective meaning and objective meaning”?²⁸ It is language or discourse. Language is essentially both the expression and exhibition (λεγειν) of subjective meaning and something objective that is exhibited (λεγμενον), that is, the measure and law that

everyone accepts. Language is a system, which exists solely through everyone's attentive listening to it and accepting it universally. Language is something human and at the same time something natural. It is something of the objectified human being and something of the humanized object. "The first object of man—man—is nature, sensuousness; [...] The element of thought itself—the element of thought's living expression—*language*—is of a sensuous nature."²⁹ Language is the medium of mutual understanding between human beings. Language is also the medium of human beings and nature, the medium through which human beings understand and grasp natural laws. Of course, this ought to be an ideal language, but not that scientific, artificially fabricated, ideal language which modern analytic philosophers conceptualize. It should be closer to that language which Heidegger praised, namely a language that is full of allusions, plentiful implications and "messages only hinted at by the literal word." This is by no means to exclude the logical norms of language or to reject the rationality and laws of language, because even in the case of implicitly indicating, norms are still required and at the very least other people's comprehension and recognition are required. The most poeticized language is also the medium of saying and showing that which is ineffable. Heraclitus's *logos* is precisely the means of fixing becoming itself, whose unfixable (bounds) make it unfollowable and ineffable, in the implications of language and thereby the means of expressing becoming in-itself. Becoming in-itself, becoming as such, is unfixable, and precisely when you want to pin it down, it changes, and what you determine is only what it changes into and becomes, not becoming in-itself. This is precisely the reason why the Milesians and Pythagoreans failed. Heraclitus thus says: "The God whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks plainly nor conceals but indicates by signs."³⁰ The role of *logos* here in Heraclitus is mainly to suggestively indicate, and among the ancient philosophers, the language he used was that most full of suggestive magical power. Moreover, generally speaking, the "magical power" of a word (like curses in primitive ages) is established on its rich suggestive meaning. There is no word that is originally "empty." A word only becomes a hollowed-out nothing because either people forget the ineffable meaning that is implied in it or it is the result of people intentionally separating a word from its meaning.

Clearly, while Heraclitus's thought of *logos* was the peak of what could be reached at the time, this was because the pursuit of philosophical language ultimately returned back to language itself through his thought. When people were debating over what kind of words to use to express and determine the origin of the world, Heraclitus declared: then use the word "word"! He bestows the essence of language upon the origin of the world (fire), enabling it to specify that ineffable "becoming" itself. This is language's awareness of itself (self-consciousness) or the awakening of language: "[w]e ought not to act and speak as though we were asleep."³¹ This role of *logos* is most clearly exhibited in Hegel's philosophy.

As stated previously, the principle of “one” in Pythagorean numbers transformed into the “oneness” of being in the Eleatic school, that is the principle of the indivisibility and unity of being. This transformation seems not unrelated to Heraclitus. We saw that Heraclitus first insisted on the identity of *logos*, pleading “It is wise for those who hear, not me, but the universal reason [*logos*], to confess that all things are one.”³² In another respect, when Parmenides of the Eleatic school formulated the proposition “Being is one,” it was grounded neither in the observational hypotheses of the Milesians nor in the mathematical proofs of the Pythagoreans, but rather in *logos*. Among extant fragments, Parmenides says at the beginning, citing the goddess’s warning: “judge by argument [*λόγος*] the much disputed proof uttered by me,”³³ but after he demonstrates and elaborates the entire doctrine about being, the conclusive statement is: “Here shall I close my trustworthy speech [*λόγος*] and thought about the truth.”³⁴ There is an obvious correspondence between the two here. So, do Parmenides’s *λόγος* and Heraclitus’s *λόγος* mean the same thing? This may be considered from two points of view. Considering the contents that *λόγος* states, the two are completely opposed. Parmenides obviously believes that viewing being and non-being as one thing, as Heraclitus does, cannot express the genuine truth. The Ionian school wanted to grasp “becoming as such,” which could only have been a pure fantasy deriving only opinions, not truth, because when you say “what is something,” it amounts to saying “what something is,” and when you are speaking and thinking in such a manner, this something has already changed.³⁵ In fact, this is indeed the case. Heraclitus wanted to express becoming as such. He wanted to grasp the *logos* of this becoming, but what was left in his hand was still only a finite thing of sensuous nature, that is, fire, or a figurative metaphor “flux” (that is, water or the flow of a river). Parmenides believed on this basis that if you want to grasp becoming, you necessarily fall into opinions limited to sensuous nature without attaining the abstract *logos*. If you want to get “trustworthy speech and thought about the truth,” you must abandon the thought of “becoming” and observe that unchanging, unmoving, indivisible being and strictly distinguish it from “non-being.” However, it is already visible from here that, although Parmenides and Heraclitus hold opposing views on the content of *logos*, Parmenides and Heraclitus are completely the same in form with respect to philosophy, ultimately wanting to find a correct and trustworthy *logos* (spoken account, wording, statement). Since Heraclitus was the first to elevate the pursuit of *logos* to the highest mission of philosophy, we could even argue that without Heraclitus’s *logos*, there would not have been Parmenides’s “being.”

Logos was the means by which Parmenides proved and derived his principle of being, which is clearly visible from Parmenides’s demonstration. For instance, he says: “It needs must be that what can be spoken and thought is.”³⁶ The Chinese translation in *Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy* is: *women bu neng bu zheyang shuo he zheyang xiang: zhi you cunzaiwu shi cunzai de* 我们不能不这样说话和这样想: 只有存在物是存在的

能不这样说和这样想：只有存在物是存在的 ([w]e cannot but say and think what is is).³⁷ Here, the word *λεγειν* (spoken or said) is precisely that word we mentioned previously, which Heidegger held should be used to understand *λόγος* (*logos*). There are also other similar formulations:

I shall not let thee say nor think that it came from what is not; for it can neither be thought nor uttered that anything is not.³⁸

The thing that can be thought and that for the sake of which the thought exists is the same; for you cannot find thought without something that is, as to which it is uttered.³⁹

He refutes the opposite path (of those like Heraclitus), arguing:

That, I tell thee, is a path that none can learn of at all. For thou canst not know what is not—that is impossible—nor utter it.⁴⁰

We are to set aside the one way as unthinkable and nameless.⁴¹

Parmenides's fragments are few. He stressed the role of stating, saying and wording such that it is clear how much weight the thought of *logos* held for Parmenides. Chen Cunfu therefore argues rightly: "Parmenides places 'Being,' 'thinking' and 'stating (saying)'" in the same series."⁴² It is unfortunate that he did not elaborate further on the relationship between these three in philosophy and did not go further than simply reducing it to the speaking habits of the ancient Greeks: the Greeks held that "what can be said can certainly be thought."⁴³ Actually, if we do not merely understand the word *λεγειν* here as "to speak" in the everyday sense, but rather treat it as a philosophical category (*logos*) that is truly of the same rank as that of "to think" and "to be," then we will see that when Parmenides makes his famous proposition "what can be thought and what can be are the same," what he means is that in *logos* thought is identical to what is. Thought and *what is* are only one and the same by virtue of *logos*, "for you cannot find thought without something that is, as to which it is uttered."⁴⁴ Thought is found in the statement, and to state is necessarily to state what is. As Hegel puts it: "[t]hus *logic* coincides with metaphysics, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts* that used to be taken to express the *essentialities* of the *things*."⁴⁵ The spoken statement or *logos* is the mediation of thought and being.

Hegel gives Parmenides an extremely high evaluation in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (and in other places), insisting that "Parmenides began Philosophy proper [...],"⁴⁶ because he put forward the analysis of Being and non-Being and held that thought is identical to Being, but Hegel does not devote much space to proving this point. His estimation of the entire Eleatic school is similar. He declares:

We here find the beginning of dialectic, *i.e.* simply the pure movement of thought in Notions; likewise we see the opposition of thought to outward appearance or sensuous Being, or of that which is implicit to the

being-for-another of this implicitness, and in the objective existence we see the contradiction which it has in itself, or dialectic proper.⁴⁷

The Eleatic school thereby attained this dialectical precondition and instrument of thought—that is, the theory of *logos*, even though Hegel does not mention it by name here. Of course, if he had mentioned it, his history of philosophy would perhaps have to be rewritten with Heraclitus returning to a position prior to Parmenides, but without mentioning this point, the thought of the Eleatic school certainly appears a bit larger in span: how is it that from Pythagoras's numbers, an opposition between being and non-being immediately shows up, whereas the Pythagorean school's ten pairings of opposites did not include it, while in contrast, Heraclitus at least has such a thought with the formulation "[w]e both are and are not"? Why did Parmenides so stubbornly oppose considering non-being as Being? Whom was he opposing? In summary, artificially placing Heraclitus after Parmenides—aside from giving historians a horrible impression—also increases the difficulty of understanding Hegel's dialectic. It makes it difficult to grasp the beginning of Hegel's logic. It makes it impossible to understand the formulation of the beginning and its movement from the dialectical implications within language itself, and results in misunderstandings such as that of considering the motivating power of logical categories as originating from outside of the system (as in Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg).

Language becoming truth

After Parmenides, the theory of *logos* was not much discussed for a period of time, while philosophers were busy exploring how such categories as being and non-being concretely constitute the world as proposed by Democritus (and his predecessors) according to his atomism. Allegedly, Anaxagoras had said "that the understanding (*λόγος*) is the criterion of the truth [...],"⁴⁸ but his discourse focused on "seeds" and "the mind (*nous*)," which are the core themes of the next chapter. The silence over the problem of *logos* would not be broken until the Sophists emerged, at which time it became the most important problem under investigation, that of the true nature of *logos*. As everyone knows, the Sophists were concerned with linguistics and rhetoric, which were their professional occupations. Concerned as they were with their professional status, they of course had to say that what they taught was the truth. However, they encountered a problem that their predecessors never clearly noticed, which was that language is a universal measure (*logos*), but because language differs for different people, language is self-contradictory. Parmenides divides language into two types, the first "trustworthy speech (*λόγος*) about the truth," the second "opinions": "[w]herefore all these things are but names which mortals have given, believing them to be true."⁴⁹ By the time of the Sophists, these two types merged into one: all of what was said clearly and logically in

language was seen as truth. So how was the contradiction of differing opinions resolved? Protagoras put forward the famous proposition that “man is the measure of all things; of that which is, that it is; of that which is not, that it is not.”⁵⁰ In other words, if you (personally) think it is true, then it is true, which actually eliminates all truth and all measure, while language (λόγος) becomes sophistry or becomes (as Aristotle put it) a technique for “making the weaker argument (λόγος) the stronger.”⁵¹ Another Sophist, Gorgias, went even further by thoroughly denying the essential attribute of language and *logos*, that is, universal communicability. His method was to separate language from its sense. He held that it is only by virtue of existing sensuous things stimulating us from outside that we generate the language to convey such qualities, “[b]ut it is impossible to say language (*logos*) has substance in the same way that visible and audible things have substance. Therefore, it is impossible to perceive the being of things from the being of language.”⁵² “Visible substances differ from language, because the means by which we perceive visible things are different from the means by which we perceive language.”⁵³ Because of this, when we perceive something, it is impossible to communicate this perception to other people with something different from this perception (language, *logos*).

The Sophists posed the following problem: for language to become truth, it must strip itself bare of the particularities of human perception and become something universal and eternally unchanging; but this universal something should not be contradicted by particular things and should have the power to unify all perceptible things. The Sophists held this to be impossible. The solution to this difficult problem was the great work accomplished by Socrates and Plato, who played the most direct role in the production of ancient dialectics. Heraclitus and even his predecessors already had dialectical thought, but more than half of it was still too cryptic. It was missing the logical form of dialectics, which only came into being thanks to Plato. The Socratic method of questioning, or “midwifery of the soul,” already set out in pursuit of this universal and eternal *logos* from the order of logical procedure.

As Hegel summarizes it, one aspect of this method is:

The development of the universal from the concrete case, and the exhibition of the notion which implicitly exists in every consciousness, and the other is the resolution of the firmly established, and, when taken immediately in consciousness, universal determinations of the sensuous conception or of thought, and the cause of confusion between these and what is concrete.⁵⁴

These efforts of Socrates at the time were predominantly to train and drill the thinking capacity of the Greeks, but the results were mostly negative: he guided the Greeks to break the limits of everyday concrete consciousness and ascend to the universal *logos*, but as to what this *logos* ultimately was, aside from a few successful instances (like “virtue is knowledge”), he mostly just

left people in perplexity without offering any answers. He also bragged about himself, knowing that he knew nothing in the face of those who were confined to knowledge of concrete things. Only in Plato, especially after establishing his theory of Ideas, does this problem count as having reached a resolution. Plato's "Ideas" initially had been proposed as a series of discrete concepts or forms like "Beauty in-itself" and "the Good in-itself," "the Large in-itself" and "the Small in-itself." The intention of proposing each "in-itself" here was to distinguish them from those infinitely varied "senses." For instance, beauty in-itself is not a beautiful can of soup; it is not a beautiful mare or a pretty young woman; rather, beauty "in-itself" is a pure and simple "substance," which all other concrete things must "participate in" having in order to be beautiful (or good, or large or small). Viewing this doctrine as idealist fiction is easy, but what is not easy is understanding why such a fiction would come about in deduction. In fact, the most immediate cause conditioning this fiction is rooted in the magic of language. That is, language can "reverse" what is meant and turn what is said into what says it (or imitates it). Karl Marx points out that

Language is the immediate actuality of thought. Just as philosophers have given thought an independent existence, so they were bound to make language into an independent realm. This is the secret of philosophical language, in which thoughts in the form of words have their own content. The problem of descending from the world of thoughts to the actual world is turned into the problem of descending from language to life.⁵⁵

This is in fact the case. Language is first used to express sensuous things, but once language is established, it becomes a universal measure, which transcends sensuous things and measures them (for example, after seeing many tables, we form the concept of table and name them all "table," so when we again run into a table we first consider whether it looks like a table). Hence, language may itself clarify what is meant by way of using sensuous things to illustrate examples (this table, that table). This reverse functioning inherent to language is the direct source of philosophical idealism.

Clearly aware of this reverse function before Plato, Gorgias said: "words do not make manifest the outside world, but the outside world makes known words."⁵⁶ Similarly, Plato (and Socrates) had no way to derive the Ideas without dialogue, without sharp retorts back and forth, without making the other party say those key words, so that this magical force of language could take effect. In effect, the Question and Answer method is originally what was meant by dialectics as Plato first understood it, that is, "the capacity to conduct conversation."⁵⁷ Here, the origin of dialectics is revealed in arising from *logos* but as Aristotle's dry and pedantic (written) prose replaced the poetic language of the early philosophers no less than the lively dialogue form of Plato, this origin became concealed from view. Philosophy became readable at the cost of becoming unspeakable. What caught people's attention

was the skeleton of language, not its flesh and blood. In Aristotle, *logos* lost its plentiful implications so that it could uphold the skeletal significance of “definitions” and “formulas.” In this respect, it was Aristotle whose steps Hegel was following. Although he himself appreciated the vividness and colorfulness of Plato’s language, he essentially still evaluated Plato through the lens of Aristotle. Aristotle argued that Plato’s theory of Ideas ran on “empty words and poetical metaphors.”⁵⁸ Although Hegel revamps the theory of Ideas at higher levels, he also views Plato’s poetic language as an immature form of philosophical expression, that is, by way of “representation.” Hegel insists the philosopher’s duty is to remove that outward appearance, no matter how beautiful and touching it may be, and excavate the essential concepts within.⁵⁹

Thus, what interested Hegel most was not that more poetic, crude and unsystematic “theory of Ideas” that Plato proposed in his early years, but his later speculative remaking of it, most prominently displayed in *Parmenides*. Hegel called this dialogue the greatest work of ancient dialectics and cites it in many places. The general belief is, propelling this great remaking: “the truth visible behind Plato’s *Parmenides* was that the *logos* is always a complex of ideas, i.e., the relationship of ideas to each other.”⁶⁰ Moreover, “as Aristotle increasingly felt the theory of Ideas untenable in the discrete sense, ‘the most universal kind,’ that is, Ideas in the categorical sense, assumed a more prominent role.”⁶¹ This remaking was undoubtedly of great significance, for its purpose was to establish in the world of Ideas a republic of “supreme Ideas.” Universals, here, are not merely generalizations of various concrete things (beds, tables and horses) but are rather conceptual syntheses of various oppositions. As Chen Kang points out, the “central problem” of *Parmenides* is whether or not “‘opposites’ can synthetically combine.”⁶² Clearly, this is what makes Hegel insist that Plato does not stop at the “negative dialectic,” but also rises to the “speculative” level of the dialectic, which sees unity in opposition and finds affirmation in the result of dialectical negation, but of course, this result does not manifest in *Parmenides*.⁶³ The works that truly explicate the unity of opposites, it seems, are *Philebus* and *The Sophists*, but the most meticulous exercises of argument are made in *Parmenides*, which is the most capable of reflecting the guiding thread and direction of Plato’s dialectic.

This is also a major leap, which illustrates that in the development of Greek philosophy to Plato, consciousness already began recognizing that for philosophy to become pure Truth, it would not only have to seek words suitable for the expression of philosophical thought but would also have to use these words to establish a unified philosophical republic, a systematic body of categories from whose interrelations new philosophical thoughts could be discovered. Precisely through this leap, the word (*logos*) transforms from the end into the means and becomes the pure instrument through which the mission of reversing what is meant is already accomplished as the word itself

heads in the direction of abstraction, specialization and hence precision as well.

Whereas in Plato the fluidity intrinsic to the word still exhibits the dialectical instinct of thought by way of “representation” or poeticization, in Aristotle, when philosophical categories combine their naked purity with similarly naked empirical data on an even greater scale, this fluidity is stripped from the word itself. Words of course still flow. Friedrich Engels subsumes Aristotle under dialectical thought with fluid categories.⁶⁴ It is just that this fluid movement is external. The causes of movement (which make the potential become actual) are consecutively listed side by side: material cause, formal cause, moving cause and final cause are ultimately reduced to the opposition between material and form, the opposition of the moved to the unmoved mover. Every word is fixed down, and even though the same thing could also have the opposite wording from different perspectives (for instance, the brick is material in relation to the house, but is also the form in relation to the clay making up the brick), it only possesses one identical relation from the same perspective (for example, the brick cannot simultaneously be the house’s material and the house’s form). That which is active (the prime mover) is outside of the entire series; it is itself the unmoved “pure form” that is god. Hegel also criticizes him: “[i]n Aristotle these substances are examined sequentially as they appear, rather than being brought together into a system.”⁶⁵ “[T]he activity of pure thoughts consist in making themselves into their own other.”⁶⁶ He also believes Aristotle sequentially lists categories in empirical fashion.⁶⁷ Even so, the dialectical magic of the word (*logos*) still exerts influence in Aristotle. The fact that he exhaustively examines something from all angles by continually determining, defining and subdividing shows his awareness that in order to exhaust the complexity of a word’s senses, it not only involves all kinds of empirical facts, but it also especially involves those mutually opposed categories (material and form, potential and actual, moving cause and final cause etc.) and it requires employing “speculation” with higher degrees of dialectical flexibility, so that only then can one closely follow the dialectical laws of objective things and fix them in some definitions. Through this work, a whole set of genuine philosophical words were determined as special terms, the vast majority of which still survive untouched in the same envelope as we use them today, but the dialectics of thought here is no longer the self-evident dialectics of words themselves. Words have lost their own magical force; they have become some everyday reliable tools, some precise and dry abstract signs with fixed singular significations. Thus, to understand the richness of the thought, one cannot begin with the rich senses of the words themselves (how it is said), but must begin with what these signs express in relation to one another (what is said). The word is sublated and what remains is the word’s definition and concept, the logic of the word. *Logos* acquired a “theoretical” or “rational” meaning and ultimately developed into a word with such narrow signification

as “logic.” In fact, the word *logos* in Hegel became the synonym of “reason,” “concept,” “Idea” or “Form.”

Gadamer, however, insists, on the basis of Aristotle’s tendency, “[i]t is a highly paradoxical twist that Hegel ranks Aristotle’s catholic *empeiria* as ‘speculative.’”⁶⁸ He also asserts that genuine dialectical logic cannot find corroboration in Aristotle, which becomes too mired in the literal aspects of words. Conversely, G.I. Stark argues, although Aristotle demotes the role of dialectical reasoning, as an instrument that could be used to discover the first principle, the dialectic obviously plays a key role in Aristotle’s metaphysics.⁶⁹ Aristotle makes language “logical,” but this becoming-logical of language was not brought about by Aristotle’s subjective caprice; rather, it is a rational “instinct” implied in the original nature of language, an instinct without which dialectical thinking would be impossible to express as clear thought (as dialectical logic). Thus, language becoming abstract, logical and precise at certain stages is needed, beneficial and necessary as well. Gadamer also noticed that “there is reflected in language—not only in its grammatical, syntactical forms, but also in its nouns—that tendency of reason to objectify which was the essential characteristic of the Greek *logos*.”⁷⁰ At the same time, he also points out that when Hegel recovers the “logical instinct” within ancient language, he substitutes the other plentiful contents with “the logical” (as the dimension of thought). To truly recover the ancient spirit of *logos*, the dialectic “must retrieve itself in hermeneutics.”⁷¹ In reality, the Hegelian dialectic suffers similar limitations to Aristotle, insofar as by using the merely “logical,” it forgets the vivid senses and poetic implications of words. In Aristotle, when the ancient dialectic was on the verge of taking its own determinate form, its source in linguistics was covered up. Similarly Hegel, despite relying subconsciously on the dialectical function of language, never clearly traces this function back to language itself. That is, he never traces it back to the original constitution of language prior to specialization and becoming abstract, which colors his dialectic with hues of rationalism and pan-logicism and in this way hides its own ultimate “roots.”

In this respect, Benedetto Croce’s viewpoint is relevant. He also believes that in Hegel, “[t]he form of language, therefore, is intellectual; it is the product of a logical instinct, which is afterwards theorized in grammar.”⁷² Genuine language ought to be poetic and artistic, but he insists that “[o]wing to this logical form, language tries to express the individual but cannot do so.” In language, “there is no logic, though it is the necessary vehicle of logical thought.”⁷³ This leads to the other extreme of mysticism, but he does point out that Hegel, like Aristotle, claims “to establish logical forms, while limiting itself to verbal forms.”⁷⁴ At the very least, this illustrates the source of the Hegelian dialectic in linguistics along with its relation to the ancient dialectic in this regard.

Marx points out that

[t]he philosophers would only have to dissolve their language into the ordinary language, from which it is abstracted, to recognize it as the distorted language of the actual world, and to realize that neither thoughts nor language in themselves form a realm of their own, that they are only manifestations of actual life.⁷⁵

What modern hermeneutics does is precisely this work of “language reduction,” whose ultimate target is to reconstruct the actual living world or the movement of life through the immediate lived experience of the actual content expressed by language. This touches on the other origin of the Hegelian dialectic that we need to discuss. It is assuredly the deeper origin, that is, the existentialist origin.

Notes

- 1 Hegel 1892, 177.
- 2 Ibid., 176–7.
- 3 Hegel 2018, 62.
- 4 Ibid., 67.
- 5 Aristotle 1941, 259.
- 6 Ye 1982, 50–2.
- 7 Ibid., 53.
- 8 Zhu 1997, 191.
- 9 Hegel 1892, 186.
- 10 Ibid., 178.
- 11 Chen 1986, 33.
- 12 Hegel 1892, 190.
- 13 See (Wang 1988, 229–30).
- 14 Hegel 1991, 262.
- 15 Hegel 1892, 200–1.
- 16 Aristotle 1941, 705.
- 17 Russell 1972, 35.
- 18 Zhu 1997, 446.
- 19 Heraclitus 1889, 88–9.
- 20 Ibid., 104.
- 21 Zhu 1997, 444–5.
- 22 Gadamer 1976, 89.
- 23 Wang 1988, 459.
- 24 Heidegger 1962, 58.
- 25 Ibid., 58.
- 26 Wang 1988, 456–7.
- 27 Heraclitus 1889, 84.
- 28 Wang 1988, 464.
- 29 Marx 1988, 111.
- 30 Heraclitus 1889, 86.
- 31 Ibid., 107.
- 32 Ibid., 84.

22 *The two origins of Hegel's dialectic*

- 33 Burnet 1920, 260.
- 34 Ibid., 263.
- 35 Zhu 1997, 639; Burnet 1920, 261.
- 36 Burnet 1920, 129.
- 37 Peking 1961, 51.
- 38 Burnet 1920, 261.
- 39 Burnet 1920, 261.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid., 262.
- 42 Wang 1988, 636.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Burnet 1920, 261.
- 45 Hegel 1991, 56.
- 46 Hegel 1892, 254.
- 47 Ibid., 240.
- 48 Ibid., 348.
- 49 Burnet 1920, 262.
- 50 Hegel 1892, 373.
- 51 Ye 1998, 321.
- 52 Ibid., 334.
- 53 Ibid., 143.
- 54 Hegel 1892, 398.
- 55 Marx & Engels 2010, 446
- 56 Loenen 1959, 199.
- 57 Fan 1984, 269, 227.
- 58 Aristotle 1991, 191.
- 59 Hegel 2009, 38.
- 60 Gadamer 1976, 80.
- 61 Fan 1984, 227.
- 62 Plato 1982, 388.
- 63 Hegel 2009, 207–219.
- 64 Engels 1940, 167.
- 65 Hegel 2009, 236.
- 66 Ibid., 206.
- 67 Ibid., 233.
- 68 Gadamer 1976, 27.
- 69 Stace 1955, 18.
- 70 Gadamer 1971.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Croce 1915, 124.
- 73 Ibid., 132–3.
- 74 Ibid., 132.
- 75 Marx & Engels 2010, 447.

2 The existential origin

The “existentialist origin” here indicates the following: when we say the ancient dialectic emerges from the original character of speech and the word (*logos*) to give definition to something fluctuating, to show it and make it known, we touch on an even deeper problem: what was it that compelled philosophers of antiquity to continually try and express it, turning from one determination to another? Rest assured that this something found itself expressed in ancient philosophy, but ancient philosophers could not fundamentally explain it and the changes that it caused simply at the linguistic or expressive level. The world of objects is always changing, and the same world of changing objects causes so many different explanations of it, among which one denies another and they enter the restlessness of dialectical movement. The progression of this dialectic could only seek its origin from the intrinsic essence of thinking but ultimately had to seek the origin from the actual movement of living. In other words, it originates from the self-contradiction of that subjective reference inverted by language, that is, the contradiction of life negating itself and transcending itself. The exploration of this contradiction is what modern philosophy calls “existentialism.” There are undoubtedly factors of existentialism in the Hegelian dialectic, which many historians of philosophy in the modern age have already assuredly acknowledged. But Gadamer believes that Hegel viewing the absolute as “activity, life, spirit” is for the most part a recent philosophical standpoint stemming from René Descartes with no relation whatsoever to antiquity.¹ So, when seeking the relationship between the Hegelian dialectic and the ancient dialectic, he only looks at the linguistic origin, which is clearly one-sided. In my view, the problem does not concern whether ancient Greek philosophy had an existentialism or not, but rather how the impulse of existentialism was exhibited in ancient philosophy and what kind of catalytic role it played in the formation of the ancient dialectic.

Existence breaks through

One could argue that the existentialist impulse had been driving the philosophers of antiquity ever since the birth of the very first school of philosophy in ancient Greece, the Miletus school. Of course, this impulse could

only have been mere potential at the beginning, enveloped in layer after layer of different descriptions that philosophers made of the objective world outside of themselves and hidden in the form of linguistic pursuits to determine the original substance of the world. When we reveal this hidden internal impulse by way of analysis, we have a series of “double explanations” for those philosophical propositions of early Greek antiquity, that is, the linguistics explanation and the existentialist explanation, all the way until propositions of double significance emerge in the development of philosophy itself.

Thales’s “water,” as we have already argued, was for finding a suitable concept and word to grasp the infinitely changing world devoid of form. But at the same time, we could also argue that the deeper reason behind water meeting Thales’s needs, was because it represented “life” in people’s viewpoint at the time; it represented the genesis of life and its fluctuation. The worship of the sea in Greek mythology was in fact also the worship of life (reproduction), which had a decisive influence on early Greek philosophy. Aristotle insists that Thales saw water as the *arche* (first principle): “[b]esides this, another reason for the supposition would be that the semina of all things have a moist nature, and water is for moist things the origin of their nature.”² That is to say, water is both that which sustains life and the essential element in the seeds of life. Simplicius also held that water is the first principle because “[i]n fact the hot lives off the moist and dead bodies dry out and the seeds of all things are moist and every kind of nourishment is juicy.”³ When we hear Thales arguing that not only animals and plants but also the sun, the stars and the entire universe are nourished by the moisture evaporating from water, we have no reason to wonder why. It is based precisely on this point that Thales can argue that all beings have souls. For the Greeks, the concept of *arche* (first principle) and the concept of *goneis* (parents) both have the meaning of generating. When Anaximander proposed using *απειρον* (the infinite, the unbounded) to interpret the *arche*, this was originally a popularly understandable formulation. That is, it means what generates things should be boundless and formless, or unbounded and unformed and what can no longer transform is already dead; it can no longer generate. “All who have touched on this kind of science in a way worth considering have formulated views about the infinite [*απειρον*-Trans.], and indeed, to a man, make it a principle of things.”⁴ In fact, a life is alive firstly because it is unformed and hence capable of transforming. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this case presents the first stage of early Greek philosophy seeking linguistic formulation, and here we can furthermore point out that such formulations fit with the Greek understanding of life and the genesis of it. Anaximander in particular mentions the evolution of human life to explain living things: “Living creatures arose from the moist element as it was evaporated by the sun. Man was like another animal, namely, a fish, in the beginning (Hipp. Ref. i. 6).”⁵

Originally man was born from animals of another species. His reason is that while other animals quickly find food by themselves, man alone

requires a lengthy period of suckling. Hence, had he been originally as he is now, he would never have survived.⁶

This illustrates the genesis of the human being as one of obtaining finite form from the formless infinite. The origin of the human being is the infinite. Now, Anaximander's notion of air (*pneuma*) finds itself in an even more direct equation with the principle of life through which it is linked with the mind and the soul. Of course, in all such formulations, the physical or somatic and the mental or psychic are interwoven together, but we can still pierce these vague formulations and see the crucial expression of the activity of all things.

Pythagoras is seen by people today as the forefather of the mathematical method in the natural sciences, but people have no way of explaining the link between the rational wisdom present in his mathematics on the one hand and his (and his school's) superstitious beliefs and religious mysticism on the other. Sometimes people think he was extremely backward, primitive and laughably ignorant, and at other times people feel a sense of wonder at his progressive "modern thought." In actuality, however, Pythagorean thought is neither primitive nor "modern." The mystical nature of his doctrine of souls was the internal impetus that drove his investigation of mathematical principles, which hence were mostly applied to the issues concerning souls. It is conceivable that the Pythagorean school's religious prohibitions, various stipulations and secret codes were all the result of applying various mathematical relations and ratios to mental life. They only appear so mystically incomprehensible for the reason that they sealed off such secretly transmitted "knowledge" from the uninitiated and they were essentially anti-religious (for instance, they worshipped beans, very possibly just because beans are round). The Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls, although obviously formed under the influence of Egyptian religion, differed qualitatively from it on the whole. The theoretical basis of it was the theory about the "unity" or "oneness" of soul:

Mind (which was the name they gave to soul) and substance they identified with the One. Because it was unchanging, alike everywhere, and a ruling principle they called mind both a unit and one; but they also applied these names to substance, because it is primary.⁷

The one is soul, Mind and creator, Zeus and Apollo, not to mention Truth.⁸ In Nature, it is the beginning of all numbers as well as the basic unit of number; in society, one is the person, the basic unit of all social groups. This one is immortal; it is the factor that remains invariable throughout all variations and that which remains harmonious throughout all relations. So, the Pythagorean "one" evolved from psychic principle into cosmic principle, or to use the ancient Chinese terminology of Hui Shi, "the small one" evolves into "the grand one." The ancient Greek background of pan-psychism is relevant here as well as the ancient Greek presupposition of the popular doctrine about the cosmos being an ordered unity. The Pythagoreans accomplished

this great task of engineering through the thought of isomorphic correspondence between the “microcosm” and “macrocosm.”⁹ They insist that the soul is the harmony of opposites and that the entire cosmos of heavenly bodies is harmonious as well; the soul is “one,” the entire universe is one; souls are fragments of ether, which participate in ethereal qualities (like cold and hot). The principle of the Pythagorean “one” was understood in the Eleatic school and in Heraclitus mainly as the unity of the whole world (the grand one), while the world’s minimal units or monads (small ones) found expression in Anaxagoras’s “seeds” and Democritus’s “atoms.” Ultimately, as the unity of the “grand one” and “small ones,” it found embodiment in Empedocles’s “love and hate” and Anaxagoras’s universal mind (*nous*).

Of course, some formulations from the Pythagorean school are too hard to explain and come full circle. For instance, some of them put “the one” together with the limited, the odd and rest, while opposing them to the many, the unlimited, the even and movement. Since the one is fixed, unchanging and unmoving, how could it generate and move all beings? Aristotle raised doubts about the Pythagoreans precisely in this way.¹⁰ How could the one be consistent with the active essence of the soul? To deal with such problems, some later Pythagoreans replaced the opposition of the one and the many with “one” and “indefinite two,” interpreting one as active form and two as passive material.¹¹ However, such revisions are still fitting with the spirit of the early Pythagorean school, because when they view the one as soul, they are referring to the best part in the soul, namely reason. “The rational part is immortal, the rest is mortal.”¹² The soul’s activity and the soul’s eternally unchanging reason do not contradict each other. On the contrary, precisely by virtue of having invariable reason as the measure, the soul can specify the unlimited and fix it in language. Therefore, language is the outbreathing of the soul, the soul is the element shaping language and is inseparable from it.¹³ Here lurks precisely the thought of *logos* later developed by Heraclitus. That is, the word and the measure are the active ground of creating change; the origin of the world is the unity of the limited and the unlimited, that which shapes itself (fire).

Heraclitus’s “fire” expresses the principle of life, which is obvious enough. He argues: “[a] gleam of light is the dry soul, wisest and best.”¹⁴ He addresses fire, “the everliving fire.”¹⁵ Aristotle argues: “[a]nd so some philosophers held the soul to be fire; for fire is the finest and most nearly incorporeal of all the elements, and furthermore, it most readily receives and imparts motion.”¹⁶ Anaximenes’s “air” is also soul, but it only expresses the passive aspect of soul, which although it penetrates all and may also be shaped into anything, air is not in possession of the capacity to shape itself, shape all things and move all things (nor is Thales’s “water”). “Fire” in contrast holds this power; it truly expresses the active aspect of soul. Hegel absorbs Heraclitus’s active dialectic in precisely this sense. He sees in Heraclitus: “[t]he latter [unity of opposed characteristics] are thus restless in this relationship, for it contains the principle of vitality [...] This principle of motion itself is becoming.”¹⁷ Hegel sees fire in his *Philosophy of Nature* as the highest stage of the inorganic

world, that is, the transitional stage to organic life; in the *Minor Logic*, he also argues: “[b]ecoming is thereby itself something that vanishes, like a fire, that dies out within itself by consuming its material.”¹⁸ Becoming “is not just the unity of being and nothing, but it is inward unrest.”¹⁹ Assuredly, in Heraclitus, being and nothing can only realize their unity and mutual transformation by virtue of this inward unrest, this principle of the vital impulse. So, the principle of vitality for the first time breaks through the layers containing it and exhibits that thoroughly active essence of itself.

Heraclitus formulates this proposition of natural philosophy that “fire” is the *arche* of all beings, and although it is sublated after it goes beyond the stage of natural philosophy in ancient Greece, it has continually played an irreplaceable role in the tradition of Western thought as an important philosophical metaphor. In the central fire of the Pythagorean school, in the Platonic and Stoic “sun” metaphors, in the traditional model of Christianity that compares the holy spirit and God to “the halo” and “the sun,” and even in Hegel’s often used metaphors of “the sunrise” or “burn,” the active role of fire so visibly penetrates the human mind that even Friedrich Nietzsche, who calls for the “revaluation” of all traditional European values, finds in Heraclitus a great champion, while proclaiming his own thought in the voice of the Zoroastrian leader Zarathustra. Fire and its brilliant light hold special importance in traditional Western thought on the same level as that held by *qi* 气 in traditional Chinese thought.

Existence and environment

The principle of “the one” piercing through the Heraclitus doctrine of fire and *logos* is predominantly a cosmological principle; it is sometimes mixed with theology, but “fire” itself is also consistent with “the wisest and best soul,” because in the few best human figures, “the small one” (the soul) and “the grand one” (the cosmos) have no clear dividing boundary. After the Eleatic school, these two sides completely separated. Xenophanes, for example, opposed analogically comparing the distinctive features of the human being to the characteristics of the cosmos or God: “The substance of God is spherical, bearing no similarity with the substance of man.”²⁰ He formulated the following well-known viewpoint in opposition to anthropomorphizing God: if oxen and horses or lions had hands, and could paint with their hands, and produce works of art as men do, horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen like oxen, and make their bodies in the image of their several kinds.²¹ God is the whole one, “this one and whole universe is the god.”²² However, God also is not identical to the natural world, but is the mover of the natural world: “[w]ithout toil he makes all things shiver by the impulse of his mind.”²³ It is only that this mind and thought is not accessible to human understanding. “[God] sees all over, thinks all over, and hears all over.”²⁴ This is to cut an unbridgeable gap between the human mind and god’s mind. This is arguably the first alienation of the life principle in early Greek philosophy.

The principle of man and the principle shared by god and man become the unique possession of god, while the individualistic one (soul, small one) becomes the holistic one (god, the one and only one, the grand one), and the existence of god becomes the threatening external environment of human existence, an estranging and mysterious outside. By the time of Parmenides and Zeno, this one and only one as the one unmoved being eliminates all leeway for individual activity and suffocates living movement. The most typical formulation of this is Zeno who, in order to prove being is only one, utilizes the infinite divisibility of individual things to dissolve the individual being or individualistic one. He asserts, if being were many, either of two cases would arise: either these many beings are points with zero volume, in which case, no matter how many zeros are added together, the yield is still zero and although this maintains the indivisibility (singularity) of the individual being (small one), this sort of "being" would actually only amount to non-being; or these many beings are not zero but have definite volume, in which case they would be infinitely divisible and would become infinitely large in number.²⁵ Because of this, unless they want to sacrifice their own indivisibility and singularity or become non-being (zeros), they would have to be simultaneously small and large, small to the point of nothing and large to the point of limitless.²⁶ Therefore, the individual existing as "one" indivisible unit is self-contradictory and impossible. If we read Zeno's arguments here through the lens of existentialism, their deeper significance is made known, which involves sublating individuality and completing totality, including the sublation of the individual's activity that is motion and facilitating the totality's super-stable structure (rest). However, that self-negating essence of individuality is exposed from the opposite side in these arguments (including the argument negating motion); individual being is not unchanging being, but instead being that is forever differentiating and divorcing from itself. Individual motion is not free of contradiction; it is established precisely on account of contradicting itself. In precisely this sense, Hegel declares "it was primarily Zeno who elaborated the dialectic."²⁷

The Eleatic school's one and only unmoving being began to fall apart in Empedocles and Anaxagoras. Empedocles saw four kinds of "being," that is, water, fire, earth and air, as the four "roots" (elements) of the world and recovered the phenomenal world rejected by the Eleatic school by means of sublating the single oneness of being. Anaxagoras went one step further, viewing the world as made up of an infinite number of fundamentally heterogeneous "seeds," thereby moving from monism to pluralism. The four elements and the seeds did both retain some characteristics of the Eleatic school's "being." All of them are unities and simple purities, indivisible and subject to neither creation nor destruction, but that single "oneness" of being had been "broken," "the grand one" divided into "smaller ones." The variety of things in nature is generated by the combining and separating of these many beings, by the difference of proportions in each mixture.²⁸ There is, however, a problem here: who separates and combines these many beings? Empedocles

proposes the answer of “love and strife,” while Anaxagoras proposes *nous* (intellect, reason).

What is “love and strife”? According to Empedocles’s account, it seems to have psychic characteristics (of emotional will) and at the same time somatic characteristics of attracting and repelling force. Here is a common phenomenon found throughout ancient thought as well as a precondition responsible for generating humanity’s pure consciousness: human beings can only represent and grasp the regularities of the objective world by first “anthropomorphizing” them and can only represent and grasp human beings’ own mental attributes by first “objectifying” and even “alienating” them. Empedocles asserts the existence of an active “love and strife” playing a role after the Eleatic school’s unmoving, one and only being, which is undoubtedly a deeper reaction to the Eleatic school suffocating individual activity; it reveals a tendency to override all beings with the original substance of life. Empedocles argues:

[t]his (the contest of Love and Strife) is manifest in the mass of mortal limbs. At one time all the limbs that are the body’s portion are brought together by Love in blooming life’s high season; at another, severed by cruel Strife, they wander alone by the breakers of life’s sea.²⁹

This formulation by no means simply describes an emotional case of Love and Hate, but rather expresses his fundamental understanding of Love and Strife. The explanation of the lawfulness of the entire natural world on the basis of Love and Strife is nothing more than an external verification of human beings’ internal experience of living activity (emotional will). Aristotle accuses Empedocles’s Love and Strife for only attributing the cause of things to “contingency” (Simplicius also thought so).³⁰ In effect, although Love and Strife in Empedocles is used to explain the lawful changes of things, it is not itself a necessary law but rather a contingent affect or free will. “Love” and “Strife” in Empedocles firstly express the literal sense of these two words, that is, the sense of human mental activity; otherwise, he would have had no need to propose this new pairing of concepts, insofar as “separation” in Anaximander as well as “aggregation” and “rarefaction” in Anaximenes would have been quite enough (both these concepts similarly expressed the sense of attraction and repulsion). For this reason, as a notable physician, Empedocles’s “more important contribution” was not in cosmology but in the field of life science.³¹

Nous in Anaxagoras further strengthens this tendency of Empedocles. The mentioning of *nous* was the first brave attempt among ancient Greek philosophers to distinguish mind from natural matter. This attempt was of course far from thorough, because *nous* still had size and shape, but this something was not mixed with other things; *nous* is a mental category that is completely separate from and opposed to matter: “*Nous* is infinite and self-ruled, and is mixed with nothing, but is alone itself by itself.”³² Only one thing

could envelop *nous* inside of it, which is the living creature with intelligent activity of mind.³³ Yet, Anaxagoras does not believe only the human body is in possession of *nous*. On the contrary, in his view *nous* is the true substance of the world, the primordial force setting all things in motion, the universal mind of the world; it is not completely equivalent to the human mind, but is rather the part possessing objective universality in the human mind, that is, reason or intelligence. However, this reason or intelligence does not, as Xenophanes argues, lack commonality with the human mind. On the contrary, it is proposed as something essentially identical to human reason from the very beginning. Considered literally, the word *nous* originally means mind, and more broadly, sensation, thought, feeling, willing as well as the subject of such activity. Ancient Greek “hylozoist” thought always had a powerful propensity for philosophical development. After Anaxagoras proposes immaterial *nous*, hylozoism ends its traditional rule; the mind no longer mixes with matter, or it manifests itself as a microparticle and fragment of matter, which situates itself outside of the material world and moves, thinks and arranges all of this world’s activity. Thus teleology began to replace hylozoism.

Anaxagoras’s *nous* marks a new stage for ancient Greek existentialist thought, which becomes conscious of the opposition between the material world and the mind and attempts to overcome this opposition in some way (teleologically). This is a fundamental problem for existentialism itself: human existence is “Being-in-the-world”; by virtue of the objective world, human existence becomes a problem, but were there no objective world, human existence would not even have problems to discuss. Existence not only maintains itself to be “one,” but also knows the world and arranges the world, making the world become “one,” making it become beautiful and good. In Anaxagoras’s view, this is *the* mode of existence of *nous*, that is, the reason piercing through the human mind and the entire world. Not all of this is clearly explicated by Anaxagoras himself, let alone “teleological” thought, which Hegel finds extremely important.³⁴ In Anaxagoras here, there is only the occasional mention of him thinking all existing things are arranged by *nous*.³⁵ He also never clearly explains the relationship between individual mind and universal *nous*.³⁶ No matter what, he was the first to utter the following thought: “[*nous*] is only the moving [cause].”³⁷ Or rather, the true moving cause that is active is the mind (or reason), which is precisely what Hegel takes as the most important principle and absorbs into his own philosophy. Here, we can first make one point: “reason” (*Vernunft*) in the Hegelian sense has two ancient Greek sources, one being Heraclitus’s *logos*, the other being Anaxagoras’s *nous*, and Hegel translates both these two words as “reason,” but they are however completely different on deeper levels of sense.

Empedocles and Anaxagoras make advances in developing Greek philosophy with respect to the prime moving force of the world. However, on the question of how this world can itself be moved, neither of them gets concrete answers. Influenced by Parmenides’s dogma that “being is, non-being is not,” Empedocles and Anaxagoras consider the world a continuous unity

constituted by “four roots” or “seeds,” which still does not truly “shatter” the being of Parmenides. Motion requires empty vacancy (non-being), without which, even if there is an external moving force, the latter still cannot impart motion to the world itself; once there is empty vacancy, the totalistic “one” is then broken up into individualistic “ones” and an abstract moving force is realized in concrete interacting (colliding) forces, which is the basic thought produced by Democritus’s atomism. The atom’s basic signification is “indivisible.” Namely, it is the most basic unit constituting the material world. The atom is extremely similar to the Pythagorean school’s numerical unit “one” (the small one); however, atoms are not mathematical points but rather fully actual beings. Atoms also differ from Anaxagoras’s “seeds,” which are not independent beings by themselves but are rather the heterogeneous constituents of beings. A seed only constitutes beings together with other constituents (other seeds), because of which “[a]ll other things partake in a portion of everything.”³⁸ The atom is independently self-subsisting and can only externally combine with other atoms, but without in any way being confused with them. Each atom is qualitatively identical to all other atoms. All differences of quality are nothing but effects caused by differences in the ways atoms combine and differences in the external shape of atoms. Democritus by such means explains that the atom is what is most in possession of individuality because it is indivisible, impassible and not penetrated by other atoms; on the other hand, the atom is also what is most in possession of universality, because atoms are identical in quality, they are replaceable and constitute all beings according to the same law of motion. Thus, although Democritus affirms individual atoms are infinitely many, his view of the world is still “monistic.” This unity of the one and the many on the basis of the original quality of the atom is far more rational than Anaxagoras facilitating the unity of the world by way of denying the self-standing independence of seeds. Moreover, Democritus insists that the so-called *nous*—soul—is also a special atom, that is, the finest, roundest and smoothest, and hence most “active” atom.³⁹ This maneuver avoids the contradiction that Anaxagoras’s explanation of the world with two essences (moving cause and material cause) slides into.

But Democritus’s contradiction also explodes into the open, which is the problem of where the moving force required by atoms to constitute beings comes from. Even though in his own eyes, this problem is perhaps absolutely meaningless because atoms are “originally” in motion, it still may beg the question, does this original motion arise from inside the atom or is it propagated between the mutual exterior of the atoms? If it is only transmitted back and forth between the exterior parts of the atoms, then Aristotle’s question still holds: where did that “first” moving force come from? If it were to come from the atom’s interior, how would this be possible? Because the concept of the atom is only that of an “indivisible,” it does not include the sense of “motion” (unlike the concept of *nous*, which, as “mind,” already analytically includes activity in-itself). The atom’s relationship with motion can only be a “synthetic” relation (we cannot help raise the question as Immanuel

Kant did: how is this synthetic a priori judgment of “the atom is moving” possible?). Later, Epicurus attributes the original moving force to the atom’s own (arising from interior cause) swerving motion precisely in order to resolve this contradiction of moving force. Hegel tacks Epicurus’s understanding of the atom onto Leucippus and Democritus, and from the very beginning finds too much connection between the atom and the private citizen’s free will,⁴⁰ to the effect that, when he later discusses the atomism of Epicurus, he can only say his doctrine does not go beyond the scope of Leucippus and Democritus. He does not see that the swerve of the atom (or curving movement) is a major improvement of Epicurean and Democritean atomism. Marx points out, the achievement of Epicurus is in realizing the internal contradiction within the concept of the atom, but without breaking the atom’s enclosure and impassibility. Without penetrating deeper into the atom’s internal contradiction, this swerve cannot gain rational explanation. This is a fundamental difficulty of ancient atomism. From the existentialist perspective, Democritus’s contribution is in providing the individual’s activity of existing with a universal ground (the atom) and environment (the void) of realizability but misses this activity of existing itself. All atoms enter into necessary and forced collisions. Even the atom of the soul (*nous*), the reason why it is the most active is not because of its own internal impulse but is only because of fineness and smoothness in its outer shape, such that when it is moved, it encounters less friction and that is all.

One who attempts to overcome this abstraction and one-sidedness is Socrates. Because of this overcoming, existentialism in ancient Greece truly enters the field of existential teleology, that is, the field of “the good.”

The teleology of existence—the Good

Human existence per se is an ethical problem. The relationship of human beings to their existential environment ultimately boils down to an ethical relationship as well. For example, putting the long-term calculation of practical utility aside, today’s ecological conservation, environmental protection and wildlife preservation even more importantly prevent the entire environment of existence from becoming uninhabitable for humanity and steer human beings’ rich sensibility away from the fate of mechanization and abstraction. This is the only way to explain why a human being is the ultimate end in-itself. Human existence and animal existence are not the same. Purposiveness is also manifest in animal life, but the animal’s purpose is negative and the animal is not conscious of it; it is simply adapting to the environment and prolonging life. Only a human being is conscious of purpose, which is her positing the end of daily self-perfection. Because of this, human existence is not blind impulsive action (even though impulsive factors are also involved), but is rather a self-conscious process of creation that is the end in-itself. In order to realize this process, a human being must also transcend the limited nature of individual life and become conscious of the common nature shared by the entire

human species, which involves first recognizing the common “spiritual nature” in everyone. Thus, the person whose end is herself unfolds as positing god and the godliness in-herself as the end. By positing “the species” as the end, existential teleology becomes the pursuit of the Good. When Socrates tells someone that he suffered painful disappointment as a result of pinning the greatest hope on Anaxagoras’s “*nous*,” this envelops two layers of sense: one is Anaxagoras’s doctrine of *nous* was never thought through to the end; he only appealed to *nous* when having to explain that first moving cause (the prime moving force), but only thought of those mechanical physical causes when having to explain concrete facts. His *nous* was itself also seen as one of the mechanical physical causes, but he never clarifies the role of *nous* through teleology and the principle of the Good (“the best arrangement”). In opposition to this, Socrates proposes a teleology with which to explain the being of humans and organisms, and furthermore to explain the being of everything, arguing that the relationship of mutual “adaptation” among things illustrates the existence of a god’s intellect arranging all things and making everything enter harmonious order in the best fashion. The long-standing opposition between teleology and mechanism in the history of Western philosophy thus first began with Socrates. The positing of this opposition is of major significance for Hegel’s dialectic. We will demonstrate more clearly later that the Hegelian dialectic shares the most intrinsic, essential bond with the teleological way of thinking. Many contemporary researchers also believe the birth of the Hegelian dialectic is most immediately connected to his ethical thought. Far from being alone in believing so, Marx also unfolds the formal critique of the Hegelian dialectic beginning with “the philosophy of right.”

Particularly worthy of notice here is that teleology, or the doctrine of the Good, is first presented from the starting point of the individual mind by its founder, Socrates whose entire philosophy is built for the sake of elucidating a moral doctrine, and this marks the first ethical turn in the history of Western philosophy, but he does not perform this task under the identity of official philosopher. We should say rather that he only does so for the sake of examining his own mind on the grounds of a reason that emanates from a mysterious “daemon” inside his mind. Hegel also points out, that “Socrates accepted the Good at first only in the particular significance of the practical, which nevertheless is only one mode of the substantial Idea; the universal is not only for me, but also, as end existent in and for itself, the principle of the philosophy of nature, and in this higher sense it was taken by Plato and Aristotle.”⁴¹ Therefore, Socrates “himself said that he knew nothing, and therefore taught nothing. [...] For the good does not come from without, Socrates shows; it cannot be taught, but is implied in the nature of mind.”⁴² In addition, Socrates felt his job to be awakening the potential goodness (virtue) that is latently present in the minds of others from birth and to thereby turn others into human beings like himself, who “knows thyself.” He apparently believed that the purpose of individual existence could only rise to consciousness in this manner of singular dialogues and enlightening encounters, and

from there expand throughout humanity as the universal good. He even left behind no written works.

However, there arises an inescapable contradiction here: that morally good nature which Socrates wishes to awaken by way of dialogue is universal by itself. That is to say, his discussions consist of instructions that call on people to abandon their own singularity, to obey the gods, to obey the laws and to obey the good commands of universal intelligence. In this way, the individual freedom that Socrates so highly esteemed was only an abstract form. Who was it that discovered such content of the universal? It was Socrates, this select person, who, listening to his own personal talent or daemon declared the intentions of the gods, and irreplaceable he was. Because of this we see that peculiar sense of a mission in Socrates, who thought of himself a gigantic gadfly sent to Athens by the gods in order to quicken the responses of this dumb ox of an Athenian state. This singular purity of his came about by chance, such that after Socrates died, the only thing he left over for posterity was that universal Truth that he announced. This universal Truth would again inevitably by way of suppressing individuality turn into something estranging for individual existence, however, and this is precisely how Plato's doctrine of the Idea of the Good came-into-being.

Of course, the alienating Idea of the Good in Plato here did not all of a sudden fall on the individual out of thin air as something indifferent to individual existence. On the contrary, it developed precisely out of the depths of the innermost part of this individual mind. For Plato, all Ideas lay hidden in the mind and people come to know them not as a matter of knowing objects outside of themselves but rather as a "recollection." The acquisition of all true knowledge is always a recollection by way of people chasing it inwardly in themselves. Hegel gives the highest approval of this "theory of recollection," insisting that Plato

presents the true nature of consciousness in asserting that it is mind in which, as mind, that is already present which becomes object to consciousness, or which it explicitly becomes. This is the [Idea] of the true universal in its movement; of the species which is in itself its own becoming, in that it is already implicitly what it explicitly becomes.⁴³

This recollection and self-chasing, one could argue, is one of the most important factors that Hegel's dialectic absorbs from ancient Greek thought. Plato insists that when the human soul recollects its own former travels in the world of Ideas and looks up to that highest Idea of the Good, the mind conjures up a madness of reason, "feels his wings growing and longs to stretch them for an upward flight, but cannot do so, and, like a bird, gazes upward and neglects the things below."⁴⁴ Plato metaphorically compares this pursuit of the soul to *eros* and fertility. This idea is intimately related to his definition of the soul's essence. He argues,

[e]very soul is immortal. For that which is ever moving is immortal [...] Thus that which moves itself must be the beginning of motion. And this can be neither destroyed nor generated, otherwise all the heavens and all generation must fall in ruin and stop and never again have any source of motion or origin [...] This self-motion is the essence and the very idea of the soul.⁴⁵

Absolutely self-moving and self-recovering (recollecting), forever immortal—these are the fundamental qualities of the soul. Plato establishes his theory of Ideas and theory of divine justice from these fundamental qualities.

Plato believes the soul's activity most purely and most distinctly manifests itself in the rational parts of the soul, rather than in the sensible parts of the soul such as desire and the passions. For this reason, only reason, only philosophical reasoning and thinking, only knowledge of "the dialectic" amount to the highest level and highest good of spiritual life and present the value and meaning of life. Because that world of Ideas to which this rational knowledge ascends is true objective reality, this objective reality, in turn, can only be reached by relying on the highest activity of reason, which alone communicates with it. In this sense, the soul as reason is substantively one with the cosmic soul (god) as substance of the world and spirit of the world. While the purpose of the soul's activity is to know the Ideas so as to attain the Good life, God's purpose is to realize that highest Idea—the Idea of the Good.

Looking back at Plato's definition of the soul's activity from the perspective of God, we may notice that understanding the soul's individuality is only necessary preparation for understanding the whole of God. Plato himself grasps the rational soul precisely from this perspective, stating:

what provides the truth to the things known and gives the power to the one who knows, is the *idea* of the good. And, as the cause of the knowledge and truth, you can understand it to be a thing known; but, as fair as these two are—knowledge and truth—if you believe that it is something different from them and still fairer than they, your belief will be right.⁴⁶

The activity of the soul is but the most direct evidence of the activity of God. The spontaneity and creativity of the individual soul only chases after the primordial movement of transcendent God. Why do human beings have to elevate their own soul to the highest knowledge that is reason and the dialectic? Only for the reason that, without doing so, human beings cannot grasp the true world of Ideas (God), because the Idea, as "what truly is," is continually in the process of dialectical movement and "has mind and life and soul," and "if there is no motion, there is no mind [*nous*] in anyone about anything anywhere."⁴⁷ As Socrates had already argued, the reason possessed by human

beings is bestowed by God and fits God's purpose. In his eyes, reason still seems like a gift commonly shared by everyone, but in Plato, reason graduates to heights distantly inaccessible to common human beings and becomes the private property of the few philosophers or rulers at the top of the hierarchy. Reason cannot be attained by just anyone who turns the eye inward or finds the right guide; only those few whose talents are of the highest degree can suddenly come to know it through long and bitter training. Such is the mad state of divine wisdom, which, thoroughly rejecting sensuous life, merges completely in mind and body with the one and only all-encompassing idea of the Good; in brief, it completely undoes individual existence in the abstract universal relations through which the human being (the philosopher) reaches the highest virtue, justice and excellence by following reason and wisdom. Thus, the Just and the Good are indifferent to individuals, or to use Hegel's wording, are grounded in a "substantial position."⁴⁸ Plato's "ideal state" does not permit the existence of Democritus's atoms and Socrates's "daemons." Only God's official representative in the human world, "the philosopher king," wields absolute power like an Egyptian pharaoh. "This movement of the individual, this principle of subjective freedom, is sometimes ignored by Plato, and sometimes even intentionally disparaged."⁴⁹

No matter what, at the speculative level of abstract Ideas, Plato affirms the mind's activity at the end of the game, even if it is alienated activity. A period of estranging the mind is indispensable for the capacity to investigate this activity in objectively purified form. The concept at a certain stage must shake off those concrete contents of sensibility to exhibit its own naked universal relations on the inside, which is what makes Hegel appreciate Plato. In particular, Hegel praises *Parmenides* and the later several books of dialogue for showing the dialectical movement inside of the concept itself and presenting a concept that negates itself and secures a unity with the concept opposing it. As Hegel sees it, this secures knowledge of the cause of the world, that is, knowledge of God.⁵⁰ In the *Timaeus*, Plato sees this unity of opposites as the principle of God creating or arranging all things:

[b]ut it isn't possible to combine two things well all by themselves, without a third; there has to be some bond between the two that unites them. Now the best bond is one that really and truly makes a unity of itself together with the things bonded by it.⁵¹

Hegel comments on this, arguing: "That is a profound saying, in which the [concept] is contained; the bond is the subjective and individual, the power which dominates the other, which makes itself identical with it."⁵² God is therefore in possession of this joining, combining or dominating power, because God is himself the highest individual or acting subject, but the activity of this subject expresses the integration of the soul with the body, the world of Ideas with the world of appearances. God is not the static abstract "one" (as in *Parmenides*), but an active "one" that manifest in the organic

living process of the whole world, insofar as it makes the world one singular “living being,” a living being with “*nous*.”⁵³ In so doing, God is not bringing about something different from himself, but is instead bringing about something similar to or not equal to himself: such a living world is God himself, who “brought to pass the self-sufficing existence which required no other, and which needed no other friendship or acquaintance than itself. Through these means God created the world as a blessed God.”⁵⁴ To say this world “requires no other” is not of course to say it requires no God, but means rather that this world is itself nothing other than the realization of God’s end, that God (as the Good) realizes Good as happiness in the world.

What becomes visible from this is the principles of life, activity, unity and purposiveness shifting in Plato from the individual to the totality, from the human being to God. The more God is enriched, the poorer a human being becomes; the more active God becomes, the greater is a human being’s passivity; God becomes the end of human existence, while humanity becomes the means of divine creation—this is precisely what Ludwig Feuerbach and Marx meant by the alienation of religious organization, whose modern representative, Hegel himself, similarly experienced such a shift from subjective substance to substantive subject. The existentialist origin of the Hegelian dialectic could be most directly traced back to ancient Greece in Platonism. Of course, this is not to say there had been no development and display of this causal factor prior to Plato. We should say rather that the entire history of Greek philosophy hosts the subterranean current of existentialism’s underlying impulse beneath the more obvious and surface-level pursuit and assertion of *logos*. By the time of Plato, this impulse is explicitly expressed and objectively determined in alienated fashion.

Plato’s affirmation of Ideas and God’s activity is still abstract. This activity never undergoes concrete analysis, but just attaches to Ideas and God himself as a hypothetical and anthropomorphic metaphor used to explain the motion of all things. Even though he mentions the purposive, his understanding of the purposive is still quite superficial and ordinary; it fails to clearly consider the purposive as the internal principle of the living (soul) itself, as the internal essence of activity or self-motility. Actually, without the purposive, that simple self-mobility (voluntary) is nothing other than contingency; it could be objectively examined as a given empirical object with no way of reaching subjective understanding (of subjectivity) from the inside. Precisely because of this, Hegel insists: “The Platonic Idea is in general what is objective; but the principle of vitality [*Lebendigkeit*] or the principle of subjectivity is not yet emphasized.”⁵⁵ This is of course said in comparison with Aristotle, whose work is to make life shed its objective contingency and particularity and become pure subjectivity. To achieve this, he again resorts to dissecting the concept of purpose.

Aristotle insists that purpose is not a static, unmoving thing, but a living process of movement from potential to actual, that is, the process of the end’s own realization. What he calls “actual” (*energeia*, *actus*) is not what we

today understand as “objective reality” and does not have the meaning of “established fact,” but rather refers to an active movement, which some translate as “realization” somewhat more appropriately. That is to say, the end is not simply what is implicit (potential) and still unrealized. We should say, rather, it is itself what is most real and everything that exists implies its end and realizes its end; if not, nothing would be. Because of this, the end is the form of the thing (the formal cause) or essence. Aristotle’s form is itself an active defining and forming of material. It is one with the end, that is, defining material in accordance with some end. Etymologically speaking, Aristotle’s form (*eidos*) is the same word as Plato’s Idea (*eidos*), for which reason we could say, Aristotle clearly gives Plato’s Idea (as the universal “one”) the implication of end. Sometimes, Hegel directly translates *eidos* as “end.”⁵⁶ This is also not without basis, because the root of *eidos* (εἶδος) is *idein* (ἰδεῖν), which means “to see.” From the human being’s perspective, the end or final aim is so closely tied with “to see” that “to see no purpose in it” means it is aimless (blind). In Chinese, the word is *mudi* 目的, which also means “the eyed target.” Clearly, Aristotle’s concept of end encompasses two moments, one of which is the activity and living movement of the self-realization process. The end is the cause (final cause) of something’s movement. This implicit activity or realization of capacity is what Aristotle calls *entelechia*, which is the end as the living as the mover, actor and self-realizer. The second moment is the “seen,” that is, the desired and thought end in itself, which, as unmoving and static end, is the Good. In this respect, the end is itself also the object of knowledge, and moreover, this knowledge is the content of the highest level of cognition that is reason (*nous*). Aristotle insists that the science of investigating the final end of things is necessarily higher than those secondary-level sciences: “[t]his end is the good in each class, and in general the supreme good in the whole of nature.”⁵⁷ The investigation of this good does not include any other end aside from the purest end of human beings themselves:

Evidently then we do not seek it for the sake of any other advantage; but as the man is free, we say, who exists for himself and not for another, so we pursue this as the only free science, for it alone exists for itself.⁵⁸

Aristotle even sees such a scientific consideration as that of the highest virtue, the highest happiness and the highest good. Thus emerges the following cycle: the life of reason (*nous*) consists in striving for the good, and this striving is itself that good which it is striving after. This seems self-contradictory, but it expresses the essential structure of true life: life consists in striving after life, and similarly, freedom consists in striving after freedom, while rational thought consists in rational thought acting as object. It is precisely in this sense that Aristotle formulates this proposition: “thought and object of thought are the same,” and asserts that thought is life and God “is a living being.”⁵⁹ What Hegel particularly addresses and what Aristotle presents as the highest form, “the thought of thought” (νοησις νοησεως), means this as well.

In effect, Aristotle's concept of end is for the sake of revealing this living structure, which mainly points to an intrinsic purpose (for instance, an organism) and not an extrinsic purpose (for instance, a chair is for people to sit on). By virtue of having intrinsic purpose, activity becomes *entelechy* with its own self-determining law or *logos*; it becomes a process of realization in accordance with reason and liberated from contingency. What truly acts is that reason or spirit who orderly moves beings to a certain order of ends. In Aristotle's concept of end, the two principles of Greek philosophy, that of *logos* and that of *nous*, ultimately converge in one end: *logos* becomes the *logos* of organic life and the living impulse of *nous* is given intrinsic measure and determinacy. Of course, this fusion already began in Plato, but the truly integral combination of *logos* and *nous* as the two indivisible moments of "reason" would only come about thanks to the concept of intrinsic end that Aristotle elucidates.

Compared with Plato's theory of Ideas, Aristotle's theory of ends to a certain extent eases the alienating tendency of existentialism. Because Aristotle emphasizes singular substances, insisting on the priority of experience and sensibility, he leaves more leeway for individual existence, for choice of free will and for human beings' moral self-perfection. His understanding of the good is more colored by experience than Plato's. He insists that the good is inseparable from happiness, from human joy and pleasure. According to his handling of the two great principles of Nature, the teleological principle of purposive organism and (what later becomes the mechanistic) principle of material necessity, teleology rules over material necessity while Nature itself is sensuously transformed into humanized Nature. Even though all this ultimately boils down to the existence and activity of God to the extent that Thomas Aquinas could even harness Aristotle's doctrine for the sake of founding the orthodox school of Christian theology, this teleology prepared the soil for the revival of dialectical thinking at the verge of modern metaphysical discourse and the explosion of mechanistic intellectual thought at the dawn of the modern age. This is all clear enough already. We will later show that some kind of intrinsic teleological factor is always potentially implied in every dialectical law, but here, we must restrict ourselves to mentioning that Hegel's account of Aristotle in his history of philosophy develops from a teleological core, and that Aristotle's teleology provides the most important ancient model that Hegel's dialectic draws from.

Gadamer offers a profound exposition of the Hegelian dialectic's linguistic origin in ancient Greek philosophy. He points out that for Hegel,

[f]or the guidance in speculation which the logical instinct of language is able to provide, ancient philosophy was paradigmatic. Though in no sense a linguistic purist, Hegel, in seeking to overcome the estranged language of *die Schulmetaphysik*, in suffusing its foreign phrases and artificial expressions with the concepts of ordinary thought, succeeded in recovering the speculative spirit of his native tongue for the speculative movement of his philosophizing.⁶⁰

However, relatively speaking, Gadamer ignores the deeper existentialist source of the Hegelian dialectic and especially fails to trace this origin back to the ancient Greek spirit of *nous*. Even where Hegel clearly cites ancient doctrines of soul, doctrines of life and viewpoints on activity, Gadamer still insists this is the result of Hegel's miscomprehension, of using modern conceptions of self-consciousness to make far-fetched interpretations of ancient philosophy and to artificially refine it.⁶¹ We could perhaps consider this neglect to be the re-expression of what Heidegger called "forgetfulness of being" in this student of Heidegger's with respect to handling ancient philosophy. Actually, the logical instinct of language emerges precisely from the existential (or teleological) instinct building up in language, why a category in his explanation has to negate itself and transition into its opposite category, then once again has to return back to itself on a higher level through the explanation of the opposite category. Such a logical necessity cannot be explained with the extrinsic necessity of formal logic, insofar as it falls under that intrinsic necessity of organic life. This manifests unconsciously in ancient languages as naive dialectics. Ancient language naturally carries this characteristic of organic life because language, aside from serving as the social tool of mutual communication between one human being and another, also has the poeticizing quality of expressing existence; put otherwise, precisely because it has this expressive quality, it can become a tool of social communication (of course, the other way around one could say: the poeticizing nature of language can only take form in social communication). Because of this, the logical instinct of language is a lived experience of existence, whose necessity consists in the direct self-evidence and certain undoubtedness of this lived experience and not in the necessity of indirect proof or external evidence. In actuality, this nature of language was perhaps not clearly noticed by Hegel himself, but he utilized it to realize the logical movement of concepts nonetheless.

We have revealed the guiding methodological significance that these two ancient sources of the Hegelian dialectic, the linguistic (*logos*) and existential (*nous*), hold for Hegel's dialectical analysis. These two sources act as two major principles weaving the fabric of Hegel's system. Neglecting any one of them will cause a one-sided understanding of Hegel. Generally speaking, those investigators of the linguistics side find it easy to highlight the Hegelian dialectic's rationalism and logicism, often interpreting Hegel from the methodological perspective; the downside of investing so deeply in the existentialist side is falling prone to restricting oneself to the Hegel's irrational and mystical side, looking at Hegel's philosophy purely from the ontological perspective. I insist, however, on the visibility of these two sides synthetically integrating in nearly every moment of Hegel's own philosophy (whether it is the bigger moments or the finer moments of the whole). We could even argue that the Hegelian dialectic, put briefly, is the attempt to determine the indeterminable that is life, existence, activity and freedom with language and logic, or put the other way around, the attempt to impart already abstracted

and rigidified linguistic and logical forms with internal life and impetus of “self-movement.” Thus, in Hegel’s view, the key is the need to find that “self-determining objectivity [...] the authentic ground that ought to be reached, that unfolds itself and determines itself, and in this way provides a place for the particular content, giving it scope within itself and containing it within itself.”⁶² Clearly, the two major sources that we previously traced the Hegelian dialectic back to, the linguistics origin and the existentialist origin, mark the intrinsic radiance of two essential moments composing Hegel’s dialectic. They are not only grounds upon which to understand Hegel’s analysis of ancient philosophy; they are also grounds upon which to understand Hegel’s own philosophy.

Of course, these two essential features of Hegel’s dialectic can be traced back to the source of Western philosophical thought that is ancient Greek philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle, but in another respect, they can also trace back their own intellectual backgrounds to the Western European and German zeitgeist of the eighteenth century along with its philosophical expressions, especially in the direct line of transmission and inheritance observable from the epoch-making impact of Kant. Hegel’s dialectic clearly took shape, technically speaking, through the critique of Kant’s philosophy and this critique envelops two folds: one is the critique of Kant’s “transcendental logic”; the other is the critique of the “good will” of Kant’s practical reason. Domestic scholars inside of China often only notice the omnipresent law of dialectical unity discovered throughout Hegel’s critique of the antinomies of Kantian transcendental logic, while neglecting the insistence on true freedom of will that was the more intrinsic, far more important and, temporally speaking, much earlier actuating force for the Hegelian dialectic. In fact, during the Frankfurt school phase of Hegel shaking off the Kantian influence and realizing the “major turns” in his thought, Hegelian thought is marked firstly by critiquing Kantian ethics, posing the problem of human beings’ self-dividing (self-denial) and of the reunification of this division, and presenting the concepts of “life” and “love.”⁶³ The problem of reforming “the transcendental logic” is not even on the agenda at this point in time. Rozenkranz, Haym and Müller all unanimously point out that the “love” of which Hegel speaks at this point later becomes “reason” and that the “life” of which he is speaking here later becomes “spirit.”⁶⁴ I argue that if love here indicates reason, then it is not reason in the sense of *logos* but is rather reason in the sense of *nous*. Hegel’s critique of Kantian reason at this point even involves the “intentional dodging” of this word.⁶⁵ He just needed to break through the extrinsic constraints of the formalistic *logos* with the individual living being’s spirit of *nous*, in order to discover a new *logos* (reason) richly filled with content and living vitality. This is Hegel’s later dialectical logic, namely the dialectical reason that he formulates in contradistinction to Kantian reason (which is actually understanding).⁶⁶ Clearly, even Kantian philosophy’s influence on Hegel can only be authentically understood through the interrelation between these two major factors in the Hegelian dialectic,

and this interrelation is not clearly explainable unless it is traced back to that speculative structure generated by the ancient Greek dialectic.

However, in order to grasp further the historical sources of the Hegelian dialectic, we still want to undertake work that up until now seems not to have been done by anyone, that is, make a systematic comparison between the ancient Chinese dialectic and the ancient Greek dialectic, mainly to explain the difference in origin between the Hegelian dialectic and traditional Chinese dialectical thought. This may help eliminate some of the prejudices that Chinese scholars often fall prey to when considering Hegel's dialectic, due to there being no alternative, and for restoring the original complexion of the Hegelian dialectic.

Notes

- 1 Gadamer 1976, 29.
- 2 Guthrie 1962, 55.
- 3 Kočandrlje & Dirk 2017, 69.
- 4 Aristotle 1941, 617.
- 5 Burnet 1920, 46.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Aristotle 1991, 71.
- 8 Zhu 1997, 282.
- 9 Hegel 1894, 396.
- 10 Zhu 1997, 322.
- 11 Ibid., 321.
- 12 Peking 1961, 36.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Heraclitus, Kahn 1981, 77.
- 15 Ibid., 140.
- 16 Robinson 1902, 15.
- 17 Hegel 2009, 74.
- 18 Hegel 1991, 146.
- 19 Ibid., 143.
- 20 Wang 1988, 556.
- 21 Burnet 1920, 81.
- 22 Peking 1961, 46.
- 23 Guthrie 1962, 374.
- 24 Burnet 1920, 81.
- 25 Wang 1988, 691–700.
- 26 Peking 1961, 60.
- 27 Hegel 2009, 66.
- 28 Wang 1988, 808–9, 884.
- 29 Burnet 1920, 152.
- 30 Wang 1988, 826.
- 31 Wang 1988, 8; Burnet 1920, 846.
- 32 Burnet 1920, 191.
- 33 Wang 1988, 915.

- 34 Hegel 2009, 102–3.
- 35 Ye 1998, 238.
- 36 Wang 1988, 918–9, 943.
- 37 Hegel 2009, 103.
- 38 Burnet 1920, 191.
- 39 Wang 1988, 1044–5.
- 40 Hegel 2009, 317.
- 41 Hegel 1892b, par. 5.
- 42 Ibid., sec. 2, pt. 1.
- 43 Hegel 1892, 33.
- 44 Plato 1914, 483.
- 45 Ibid., 470–1.
- 46 Plato 1968, 189.
- 47 Plato 1921, 385.
- 48 Hegel 1892, H2.
- 49 Ibid., 109.
- 50 Hegel 2009, 104–5
- 51 Plato 2000, 17.
- 52 Hegel 1892, 75.
- 53 Ibid., 74.
- 54 Ibid., 78.
- 55 Hegel 2009, 234.
- 56 Ibid., 237.
- 57 Aristotle 1991, 5.
- 58 Ibid., 6.
- 59 Ibid., 196.
- 60 Gadamer 1976, 31.
- 61 Ibid., 9, 12, 15, 25–6.
- 62 Hegel 2006, 132.
- 63 Song 1989, 56–74.
- 64 Ibid., 67–8.
- 65 Ibid., 58.
- 66 See (Lypp 1978); young Hegel’s main interest had been exploring how common ethical actions could become free, for which reason the formation of the first concept of the dialectic is tied to ethical principle.



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Part II

The dialectical beginning of Hegel's philosophy

Generally speaking, to understand a philosophical method, the best way is to analyze the beginning of the philosophy in question—if it has any kind of “beginning.” Bertrand Russell argued there are two types of philosophy: one is like a pyramid, under whose peak rests a solid foundation, so solid that pulling out one or several bricks would not fundamentally impact the pyramid as a whole; the other is like an upside-down pyramid, whose massive architectural complex stems entirely from one point alone, the destruction of which causes the entire pyramid to crumble. Russell is obviously mocking this sort of philosophy, but this mockery does not actually make any sense, for an upside-down pyramid could fully flip back to upright position through a change in the starting point, whereby, at the very least, it would not all come crumbling down by dint of the starting point being refuted. Against this view, Heidegger insists that a true thinker always only thinks one thing, which is nothing other than the tradition of Western philosophy (starting from the *arche*) with its foundations in ancient Greece, and this most aptly describes such a system as Hegel's.¹ Hegel, more than any other philosopher, focuses on the importance of the beginning. At the beginning of his *Science of Logic*, he spends pages specifically to discuss the unprecedented question “what must be taken as the beginning of the sciences?” He tasks himself with the following mission: from beginning to end, to gradually demonstrate the consistency of all logical categories and their processual unfolding from one beginning, not by exceeding the scope of the beginning in the end but, on the contrary, by deeply revealing and returning to the beginning. The beginning is the miniature, the embryo, the template and basic formula of Hegel's entire philosophy; it is also the prototype framework of his method (the dialectical method). It is absolutely no wonder that Hegel researchers outside of China still continue to rank and greatly debate the problem of the beginning of Hegel's philosophy as one of the central problems. Yet this problem appears not to have received adequate attention inside China.

Modern philosophies since Descartes have explicitly made the clear and distinct understanding of the beginning as the presupposition of all rational philosophical systems:

Hence I saw that at some stage in my life the whole structure would have to be utterly demolished, and that I should have to begin again from the bottom up if I wished to construct something lasting and unshakeable in the sciences.²

From here, the problem of why philosophy needs a beginning is thought to be already solved: if philosophy wants to become a science, it must have a beginning and indeed a firmly unshakable starting point. Hegel basically belongs to this tradition of scientific reason in modern philosophy. He clearly, though not explicitly, considers philosophy to be the highest science or science as such. However, while Hegel seeks this scientific beginning, he also fully recognizes the self-contradictory nature of this demand. That is, according to the ordinary understanding of formal logic, any beginning or ground is in itself groundlessly supposed, which necessitates infinite regress in pursuing a beginning. Hegel resolves this contradiction of formal logic by means of understanding it as a dialectical contradiction. That is, he does not rigidly understand the beginning; he does not consider the beginning as a ground that is absolutely adequate and final, but rather sees the beginning as living, as the seed of life, which is not complete in-itself and is therefore truly a beginning, “endowed with the impulse to carry itself further.”³ Every beginning is incomplete, which, far from disqualifying it as a beginning, internally motivates it to progress forward and forcefully seek completion. Thus, a beginning cannot be understood as a first “cause” standing outside the logical chain. On the contrary, it is an inward progression and deepening, which, far from producing a line of products that differ from itself, gradually exhibits the degrees of depth and concealed Truth in-itself. Because of this, on the one hand Hegel resolutely insists that the “beginning must then be absolute,” “so there is *nothing* that it may *presuppose*, must not be mediated by anything or have a ground, ought to be rather itself the ground of the entire science.” In such a beginning, “there is only present the resolve, which can be viewed as arbitrary, of considering *thinking as such*.”⁴ On the other hand, Hegel also points out: “*progression* is a retreat to the *ground*, to the *origin* and the *truth* on which that with which the beginning was made, and from which it is in fact produced, depends.”⁵ The beginning is also grounded; it is only that this ground does not precede it and is not external to it, but is rather internal to it, for which reason the beginning effectively grounds itself; it is the true *causa sui* (the self-cause).

Penetrating the rationalist *logos* with the existentialist principle and spirit of *nous* is the theme of Hegel's doctrine of beginning.

Notes

1 See (Gadamer 1976, 110–1)

2 Descartes 2008, 13.

3 Hegel 2010, 739.

4 Hegel 2010, 41.

5 Ibid., 49.

3 Analyzing the beginning of the *Science of Logic*

The tradition of modern rationalist philosophy is the application of formal logic and even the mathematical and geometrical method to construct a logically self-consistent system. Hegel is the great culminating figure of this tradition as well as the high mark of this tradition transcending itself. He transforms the *Science of Logic* from a method that is externally and arbitrarily adopted into the foremost object of scientific investigation, elevating it from the position of one science among all the other sciences into the science of all sciences, or “pure science.” Of course, this transcendence is in one respect also logic transcending itself, whose goal is still thorough-going logical consistency. When Hegel considers logic as the chief object of philosophical thinking, he also turns “pure thought” and the Concept into logic’s only subject matter:

This concept is not intuited by the senses, is not represented in imagination; it is only subject matter, the product and content of thought, the fact that exists in and for itself, *logos*, the reason of that which is, the truth of what we call things.¹

He proposes “[f]or the dead bones of logic to be quickened by spirit and become substance and content, its method must be the one which alone can make it fit to be pure science.”² Obviously, this is not roundly rejecting *logos*, but is rather imparting it with spirit and soul (*nous*), or sentience, thereby completing it, making it become the truly acting standard or law, that is, the vital substance of the vibrant world. Transcending “instrumental reason” (understanding) is for the sake of nothing other than positing “teleological reason,” which is my self-coined term. In Aristotle, the doctrines of *logos* and *nous* are synthetically united in teleology (see the previous part), which represents a more thorough strain of rationalism, because it not only makes reason in the sense of *logos* effectively operative in the means of realizing some merely pragmatic (and therefore subrational) ends, but also makes reason effectively operative in the end as such: the end of reason and cognition is nothing other than reason and cognition as such. But from here, the developed modern principle

of self-conscious subjective activity penetrates the ground, while the ancient spirit of *logos* and the ancient spirit of *nous* secure identity in the new ground.

Anaxagoras is celebrated as the man who first gave voice to the thought that *nous*, thought, is the principle of the world; that the essence of the world is to be defined as thought. In this, he laid down the foundation for an intellectual view of the universe, the pure shape of which must be logic.³

Hegel's *Science of Logic* is a sentient process of that which is not only active and transcending itself but simultaneously propelling and moving itself as well. At the same time, it is a necessary process that is rigorous, lawful and self-consistent.

Thus, Hegelian philosophy's rationalism and logicism are so inseparable from the active and free contents of itself that one could even argue that, without such active contents, Hegelian rationalism and logicism could not possibly have become so thoroughly complete. This fact must be acknowledged when analyzing the beginning of the *Science of Logic*.

How to determine the beginning of the *Science of Logic*?

Hegel argues: "A philosophising without system cannot be scientific at all; apart from the fact that philosophising of this kind expresses on its own account a more subjective disposition, it is contingent with regard to its content."⁴ For a philosophy to be systematic, it must have a beginning that passes through comprehensive consideration and planning, and moreover, only one beginning (having two or more beginnings precludes it from being a system). Some opine that since Hegel's system is a circle that fastens the beginning to the end, and since each moment in it is also "a circle of the circle," there is no need to be overly cautious in regarding what he calls the beginning, for one may equally enter and traverse his entire system starting from any one moment.⁵ This opinion is incorrect. Every moment of Hegel's system certainly contains the principle of beginning, and not everyone begins with the *Science of Logic*, insofar as anyone could just as well begin by reading *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, but truly understanding Hegel still necessitates discerning, in whichever of Hegel's books, what that first motivating structure out of which it begins is, and researching this structure "from the very beginning," while understanding that the entire system is generated and deduced from this beginning out of some kind of necessity. However, what, at the end of the day, is the beginning of the *Logic*? This problem is one over which much debate has historically unfolded among Hegel's researchers, not to mention that Hegel himself spent great energy and space on demonstrating it. This problem is divisible into two questions: (1) How ought the *Science of Logic* begin? (2) Which category meets the needs of such a beginning?

How philosophy ought to begin is originally impossible to resolve beforehand, insofar as it depends on what kind of thing (water, *qi*, fire, number etc.) is considered to be the origin of the world in those unrefined natural philosophies of antiquity. But since the modern age, ever since the object of philosophy shifted to epistemology, and especially to the science of the laws of thinking, the thinking of thought, that is, “the science of logic,” “there has been a new awareness of the difficulty of finding *a beginning* in philosophy,” because this involves no longer merely the content of objective being, but moreover knowing, and hence, the identity of thinking and being, the uniting of form and content.⁶ In formal logic, by virtue of bypassing content, by dint of casting aside objective Truth along with knowledge of it, while “formally” and abstractly investigating the laws of thinking, the beginning which is required ought to be “the immediately self-evident axiom,” but such an axiom is actually not, in truth, immediately self-evident. Formal logic does not tell one how to know the Truth, but merely explains, under a few universally accepted preconditions (like “the law of identity”), how to go about thinking without making errors according to such preestablished principles. Moreover, even if the premises of formal logic are immediately accepted, this in itself destroys the consistency that formal logic requires, that is, identity without contradiction; for why would every other deduction be grounded and mediated while only this premise alone is ungrounded and immediate? As for the ground of the deduction, what grounds itself? Formal logic can only confirm that a premise is “self-evident” on the basis of experience and opinion, or on the basis of this fact that “the majority accepts it,” which means nothing other than arguing that no one will doubt it. Therefore, this is an unreflective premise that is not self-consciously accepted. In other words, the premises of formal logic are not logical. We do not consider the identity of $a=a$ (read: the value of the object symbolized by the subject a and the value of the object symbolized by the predicate a) as a logical attribute. Thus, what we call the logic of identity is no longer purely logical, for it is already the synthesis of logic with an extra-logical theory about value (in the analytic sentence $a=a$, the object noun a symbolizes an individual value of a certain species, and concretely speaking, it symbolizes a magnitude of some form of measurement).⁷ In Hegel’s view, it is neither logical nor scientific.

Hegel believes philosophy’s true beginning ought to be logical in-itself; it ought to be grounded and mediated, and this ground is “pure knowing,” namely the “absolute knowing” reached at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that is, reached at the end of philosophy itself. In this way, it is also immediate: philosophy ought to begin with philosophy itself. When people discuss or find the resolve to discuss philosophy, they firstly already find themselves standing on such a level, which is not that of empirical knowledge, but of pure knowledge of the greatest universality in the logical sense. This level of thinking as such develops out of the empirical consciousness of humans over long periods of time, and hence, it is mediated, investigated and demonstrated (for instance in the *Phenomenology*); however, once thought

attains this determination of pure knowledge, that which is the beginning in this field must be something immediate. This does not mean the beginning comes from nowhere or is groundless, but means rather, that the beginning first takes place on this level of pure knowledge, where "all that we have to do [...] is to consider, or rather, setting aside every reflection, simply to take up, *what is there before us*."⁸ Put otherwise, pure knowledge is in the first place simply the self-knowing spirit of "knowing that one knows nothing" (as Socrates declared), or as Hegel put it at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "Knowing is acquainted not only with itself, but also with the negative of itself, or its limit. To know its limit means to know that it is to sacrifice itself."⁹ In this moment, knowing abandons all of its content for the sake of beginning from true knowledge. That is, knowing empties itself of all distinct content, such that not only the content filling this knowing is devoid of distinctions, but also the knowing as such that holds this content is devoid of all distinction as well; "[i]t is without distinctions and as thus distinctionless it ceases to be knowledge." That is, it becomes knowing nothing, and what we have before us is only "simple immediacy."¹⁰

It is precisely in this sense, that Hegel makes a series of (substantively identical) stipulations for the beginning of the *Science of Logic*: it must be absolute (unconditioned); it is abstract; it cannot presuppose anything; it is not mediated by anything; it is groundless; it is only the immediate as such; it cannot include any content, and so on. This is all said with respect to "pure knowing," which is also to say, to attain pure knowing, to grasp the absolute, Spirit cannot bring to knowledge any subjective content given beforehand but must fully take the posture of objective acceptance.¹¹ Here, spirit does not investigate "whence arises" the object, but immediately determines "what the object is," or more precisely, determines whether the object "is or is not." This immediate determination is crucial. If the object is (or exists), then the pure knowledge is (or exists); if the object is not (does not exist), then the pure knowledge is not (does not exist). Knowing that one knows nothing does not mean one does not even know whether the object of knowledge "is or is not." At the very least, "knowing nothing" is already the object of "knowing," because "knowing" as such is already the object of knowing (if one does not know what "knowing" is, how would one know what "knowing nothing" is?). This is not simply a case of "harboring doubt" as it is in David Hume's skepticism, but is instead a determinate knowledge; it is "knowing something." It is also far from taking up Descartes's deduction of the subjective form "I am" from "I think"; it is instead immediately determining from "the pure thought of being" that "being" is the premise of pure thought (no matter whether this pure thought is the absolute object or the absolute knowing subject). Put otherwise, "being" as such is the first pure thought; it is the first category to immediately "appear" in the field of pure thought.¹²

Therefore, in Hegel's view, "being" is that lone category suitable for the beginning of the *Science of Logic*. Although this being, this pure being, emerges solely when people (philosophers) "are resolved" to pure thought, it

as such never develops into the distinction between the subjective substance that is thinking and the objective substance that is thought; it is both “being” in thinking (I think) and “being” in the object of thought (being). One could also argue, it is that very identity of knowledge and object already reached through the conscious experience of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is only that, in the face of the philosopher who is resolved to pure thought, this identity first emerges in this purely objective way of knowledge identifying with the object. Here, pure being emerges as the pure object that unifies knowledge and object, where “knowledge has then disappeared into this unity, leaving behind no distinction from it and hence no determination for it.”¹³ This identity is still waiting to develop out of itself into the difference of thinking and being, and finally, to reach a new identity in the Concept or Absolute Idea, where the identity of being is attained in the Concept. We cannot at this first stage of pure knowledge bring the philosopher’s activity of pure knowledge into philosophy itself and into the *Science of Logic* (namely the content of the philosopher’s pure thought). Rather, the philosopher’s pure thought as such demands itself “to step back from its content, allowing it free play and without determining it further.”¹⁴ That said, this “stepping back” of thought from being (something) is by no means accomplished in a pretend way as if thought “already knew” that being is actually nothing more than thinking as such, when “to pretend” is to examine this being (thinking) as an object outside of itself. On the contrary, in Hegel’s view, when thought examines pure knowledge, thought first only knows that this pure knowledge is the object existing outside of it that needs to be examined. Thought is only “resolved” to examine “being” because thought “is” its object and thought gradually recognizes that this “being” is one and the same thing as this “examining” through the continually deepening examination of this object’s “being”; without this investment in “being,” thought is absolutely incapable of knowing beforehand that being is thinking itself. Because of this,

nor is the said beginning an arbitrary and only temporary assumption, or something which seems to be an arbitrary and tentative presupposition but of which it is subsequently shown that to make it the starting point was indeed the right thing to do.¹⁵

J.M.E. McTaggart presents an explanation of Hegel’s beginning, arguing that factually to doubt that something (anything) exists is impossible, because the existence of doubting at the very least already implies that the doubt itself “exists.”¹⁶ This Cartesian explanation is superficial, because what is under consideration here is not what is first in empirical consciousness, but what is first encountered when we consider the absolute, that is. when we consider objective pure knowledge. Stace rejects this explanation. His own explanation, though, is a perfect mess. He argues, the beginning must unfold from “being” for the reason that being has been deduced and is effectively grounded and conditioned by the categories deduced later on, such that “[t]he end is prior

to the beginning. This, too, is Hegel's conception."¹⁷ This also amounts to saying: the reason why being is the beginning is because it is effectively the end conclusion. In Walter Stace's view, Hegel should also be capable of beginning from the final category (that is, "the absolute Idea"), but he also acknowledges that Hegel's beginning with "being" was by no means arbitrarily decided. The reason is:

All deduction that is worth while proceeds from the implicit to the explicit. In a syllogism the conclusion is implicit in the premises. The Object of the deduction is to make explicit what is implicit. The explicit is the same as the patent, open, and obvious. It is only because the conclusion is not explicit, *i.e.* not obvious, that a deduction is required to make it so [...]. It is not clear how being involves substance and cause. And therefore a deduction from being to substance, cause, etc., is required. But it is obvious that cause involves being, and therefore it would be a waste of time for Hegel to proceed with the deduction in that order.¹⁸

However, why is beginning from "the explicit" and deducing what is not explicit a "waste of time," and why must "necessity" only be found in deducing the explicit from the unclear starting point (leaving aside whether or not this can be done!)?¹⁹ Are we saying Hegel is addicted to obscurity? This explanation from Stace does not hold up. Actually, Hegel's meaning is, only what is "explicit" from the very beginning is "being." The conclusion, however, is still hidden, at a time when tracing steps back to being from the conclusion would not be a "waste of time" but would be completely impossible; it only becomes possible to turn back after the conclusion is already deduced from being and made explicit, which is to say, the order of steps in the backtracking only becomes visible from this process of deduction, whereupon we detect already in the beginning the undetected (potential) utilization of that which is in the conclusion, which again proves why beginning from being is the right course. Stace surreptitiously swaps the question of why we begin with being (this being is explicit in Hegel's view) for that of why we first explore "in which way being implies substance, cause, etc.," (which is of course unclear at the beginning), and surreptitiously swaps the question of why we cannot begin from the conclusion (which is still unexplained) for that of whether we need to explicate "cause implies being" (which is said to be self-evident, but before being is first posited as the beginning, it is actually even more unclear than "being implies cause"). This defeats the purpose of Hegel's thought.

Thus, when Hegel considers being "the groundless immediate" and asserts "[t]here is no need, therefore, of other preparations to enter philosophy, no need of further reflections or access points,"²⁰ he effectively already has a mediating ground, a preparatory reflection, which is setting this purpose of "to enter philosophy." Because of this, although in the general sense Hegel argues, "there is nothing in heaven or nature or spirit or anywhere else that does not contain just as much immediacy as mediation, so that both these

determinations prove to be unseparated and inseparable and the opposition between them nothing real,”²¹ in particular senses, such as “to enter philosophy” and to examine the kingdom of pure knowledge, Hegel again must find a “simple immediacy” to act as the beginning, and temporarily throw the mediating ground that is propping it up behind it as impure knowledge (as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* examined). “Philosophy does not have a beginning in the same sense as the other science, so that the beginning only has a relation to the subject who takes the decision to philosophise, but not to the science as such.”²² The need only arises to find a beginning and starting point because someone (the philosopher) “takes the decision” to investigate thinking as such, and this seemingly extrinsic resolving oneself to philosophizing then becomes a necessary process intrinsic to philosophy itself. “Philosophy as such” without a starting point only becomes real in the course of initiating it, but this starting point of philosophy is ultimately purified by way of eliminating all impure knowledge in it, putting all of it aside, and leaving only the simplest and purest remainder, which, having no further attributes, is thus not further analyzable (divisible, separable), and this is “pure being.” Being is the category that is implied and hidden in every proposition and empirical consciousness. In empirical consciousness, it is undetected by awareness; it is never singly put under consideration, or at the very least, it is never considered as “pure being.” The modern empiricist, Russell, thought that restricting the usage of “exist” to “descriptions,” “clears up two millennia of muddle-headedness about ‘existence,’ beginning with Plato’s *Theaetetus*.”²³ What Russell touches upon is only “existence” and not pure being, not Aristotle’s being qua being (το ον, *Sein*). This becomes understandable merely by looking at Russell’s analysis of Descartes’s “I think, therefore, I am.” He argues that “Descartes’s indubitable facts are his own thoughts,” and that the word “I” is thus obviously a proper name for Descartes himself, but Russell then argues that the word “I” does not describe a known datum.²⁴ Hence, it seems that it ought to be a description and not a proper name. So, can we apply “exist” to “I”? Russell dodges this thorny question. He argues, “[h]ere the word ‘I’ is really illegitimate; he ought to state his ultimate premise in the form ‘there are thoughts.’”²⁵ As to why the word “I” is illegitimate, Russell never gives an explanation. Why can we only say “there are thoughts,” but cannot say “there is I” (that is “I am”)? At any rate, once pure being is extracted from everyday empirical consciousness, it is already stripped of all sensible representations and experiences as it becomes the object of consideration for higher-level thought (that is thought as thought).

Aside from the aforementioned analysis of “pure being” as the beginning, Hegel also examines some other possibilities. For instance, he asks whether or not there are any other likewise immediate or even more immediate categories aside from “being,” that could suitably serve as the beginning. Of course, such considerations in Hegel are only supplemental additions: “We may add the following further reflections which should not serve, however, as elucidation and confirmation of the exposition—this is complete by itself—but

are rather occasioned by notions and reflections which may come our way beforehand.”²⁶

That is to say, being is not posited as the beginning with the supplemental support of refuting these other possibilities. Rather, being logically already posited itself as the beginning. Rüdiger Bubner argues that Hegel suddenly speaks of being, because other explanations are already proven unfit to bear the premises.²⁷ This is not certain. It is not necessary to refute whatever opinions arise by chance. Such refutations would only be needed to assist in eliminating some misunderstandings and preconceptions. Hegel remarks that people might, in the ordinary scientific manner, propose the concept of “beginning” as the beginning, then additionally “analyze” this concept and turn it into the first, determined concept. At first sight, this maneuver seems more immediate than beginning with “being” (because this move begins with “beginning” itself), and at the same time, it is also analyzable, unlike “being,” which is too abstract and ungraspable to analyze. Hegel compared these two ways of beginning, arguing that to begin with “beginning” would actually still amount to beginning with being, because analysis reveals that beginning is itself “the unity of being and nothing,”²⁸ which is “becoming” simply with an additional reference to “further progression.”²⁹ Beginning is but “being that is still nothing.” Without understanding the dialectical unity of being and nothing, there is neither a way to clearly assert what the beginning really is, nor a way to precisely define it. Therefore, if you wish to begin with “beginning,” you still first have to place the categories of being and nothing in front of it and use them to define what beginning means; otherwise, this “beginning” is only a vague representation, about which everyone will statistically agree, but without each of their understandings ever effectively converging on the identity of it, which is by no means “self-evident.” More importantly, this maneuver of “beginning with beginning” is methodologically an extrinsic method of analysis, which begins with the concrete (beginning), then extracts by external force the more universal and more abstract (like being and nothing) from this concrete something, thereby bringing about the movement of categories. This external force is taken from elsewhere by the analyst, who contingently applies and imposes it on this concrete object. Different analysts have different ways of analyzing, but none of them have any relation to the necessary structure intrinsic to the concrete thing. Yet, absolute knowledge demands the investigator to consider and describe his object in a completely objective manner, to allow the object to unfold itself out of its own movement of beginning and comprehend the increasingly concrete and plentiful totality. If the analyst artificially extracts a moment (like becoming, which is also “beginning”) from this forward-progressing chain, then this extraction interrupts the progression of thinking. On the one hand, one must retreat to that more abstract starting point (being and nothing). On the other hand, one must also add the thought of “further progression” to this category from the outside, to make it capable of continuing activity. Hegel on the contrary demands not an extrinsic analysis of beginning but an immanent analysis, which analytically

derives all later categories from the immanent conflict intrinsic to the beginning as such, without any need to borrow extrinsic premises from elsewhere. Thus, immanent analysis is itself a process of self-comprehension, or rather, it synthetically perfects itself, developing and forming that concrete totality. Therefore, the beginning is not starting to look outward, but is the start of inward retracing: “[i]t is in this manner that each step of the advance in the process of further determination, while getting away from the indeterminate beginning, is also a getting back closer to it.”³⁰ The beginning analytically derives the later categories from itself and simultaneously synthesizes these later categories into a concrete totality by itself, which is originally one and the same process. Because of this, when Hegel insists the beginning “cannot be anything concrete, anything containing a connection within its self,” and hence, “the beginning itself, is to be taken as something unanalyzable, taken in its simple, unfilled immediacy,”³¹ what he means to say is the beginning cannot be taken up from the outside as a static object of analysis given beforehand, which does not mean the beginning cannot unfold as a self-activating movement of internal analysis, a movement of self-differentiating into two (analysis) and simultaneously integrating two into one (synthesis).

Hegel also mentions another possible opinion, which is that of starting from “the thing” (*die Sache*). For the same reasons as those above, Hegel similarly rejects this fantasy of desiring to grasp the concrete category (fact) at the very beginning. Moreover, Hegel also places more value on Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s maneuver, that of considering “the self” as the beginning. Hegel sees that this demand of Fichte’s arises from empirical consciousness’s need of immediacy. That is, “the I” is the most immediate in my conscious experience. However, Hegel argues that this empirical consciousness can only rise to pure knowledge or objective knowledge by undergoing the refinement of sublating and purifying its singularity and specificity—this is precisely the work Hegel himself accomplishes in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In a certain sense, Hegel’s “pure being” is also a universal self (because being as such is the identity of subjective and objective being in-itself, both the being of the object and the being of the self), but he argues that beginning with the self could induce a misunderstanding, which is habitually viewing this most abstract universal self as the self of individual experience (incidentally, this reason is insufficient, because, as he himself acknowledges, “being” itself could also be misunderstood and effectively already is misunderstood as the concrete “existing entity” or “existence”); moreover, although the universal self is abstract enough by itself to express “pure knowledge,” compared with “pure being” it would still be “something concrete, and this concrete would contain a diversity of determinations in it.”³²

Through such arguments, Hegel firmly establishes that the beginning is necessarily being and cannot be anything else. This is even “the nature of a beginning itself.”³³ This is not to say, however, that he perfectly grounds himself at this time by choosing being as the beginning. In his view, clearly distinguishing the beginning’s grounds is not completely doable beforehand,

requiring, as it does, the further development of the thing and even the completion of the entire system of the science of logic. Because a beginning that is posited in such a manner is not a settled point of departure discovered by happenstance, but is rather an impulse and a “resolve,” and because such a beginning does not refer to another point outside of itself, but rather self-referentially points inside itself, it penetrates deeply inward into what we are today accustomed to call “self-searching.” Here, the searcher and the searched are one and the same (self), but that the search is still required is also clear evidence that they are not completely static equals, insofar as there is difference in “the self,” not an external difference, but an internal difference: the self is undiscoverable outside of the self. Socrates spoke of “knowing thyself,” and Plato developed this principle into the theory of “recollection,” both of whom meant precisely this. Hegel fully utilizes this theory. He forewarns in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: “In that new shape of spirit, it likewise has to begin all over again without prejudice in its immediacy, and, from its immediacy, to rear itself again to maturity.” “However, that *inwardizing re-collection* has preserved that experience; it is what is inner, and it is in fact the higher form of substance.”³⁴ “*The aim*, absolute knowing, or spirit knowing itself as spirit, has its path in the recollection of spirits as they are in themselves.”³⁵ Here, the stem of the German word *Erinnerung*, translated into English as “recollection,” hints at the meaning of “inwardizing” or “inwardly probing.” Clearly, the beginning of Hegel’s *Logic* is to be understood as “starting the probe inward.” It is to be understood as beginning the self-searching of the internal ground; it is to be understood as absolute knowledge coming to know the self through the “resolve” of the philosopher who wills to know. As such, this beginning is not a static point but is itself a movement, a process.

Thus, this question “what is the beginning of the *Science of Logic*?” passes over here into the following question: how does the *Science of Logic* begin?

How does the *Science of Logic* begin?

Common scientific systems always begin with a definition, which is a proposition, or rather, a judgment. For example: any common psychology book states from the very beginning: “psychology is the science that investigates psychological phenomena”; then it explains and categorizes “psychological phenomena,” tracing the causes and delimiting the scope; then it immediately elucidates the divisions and sections of psychological phenomena. This is the common case for general scientific systems, but let us look at how Hegel’s *Science of Logic* begins. The first sentence of this system reads thus: “Being, pure being—without further determination.”³⁶ In German: *Seyn, reines Seyn,—ohne alle weitere Bestimmung*. Wolfgang Wieland notes that Hegel’s *Science of Logic* begins by simply mentioning this first category, which is very peculiar, and that this infamous first “proposition” of the *Science of Logic* is not even a complete proposition but a syntactically incoherent one.³⁷ Indeed, by beginning the scientific system of logic with this incomplete sentence (akin

to a slogan: go “being”!), Hegel’s *Science of Logic* is probably one of a kind with no parallels to be found in the history of philosophy. I argue, this is the result of the absolute and unconditioned immediacy of the beginning (being) itself, which is the simplest and most abstract category. We cannot say “what being is” (that is, define the beginning concept as ordinary sciences do). We cannot even say being “is” (or being “exists”). In the former case, every “what” is (or possesses) “being,” but being itself is not (and does not possess) every “what.” In the latter case, to say being “is” (or “being exists”) is nothing more than a tautological repetition, whose significance is of equal value with “presenting” being. Furthermore, and more importantly, the entire spirit of the *Science of Logic* cannot be determined by such extrinsic means as defining and judging, but is to present the category and concept’s own movement. Thus, Hegel often insists “the proposition, in the form of a judgment, is not adept to express speculative truths,”³⁸ and “due to the form of the simple judgment,” it does the injustice of rendering content “one-sidedly.”³⁹ Everyone’s perplexities and misunderstandings concerning Hegel’s dialectical propositions generally stem from trying to understand one of Hegel’s propositions (like “being is nothing” or “being is non-being”) as a judgment in general, that is, from assuming that one concept in it (like “being”) is a fixed subject or substrate and another concept in it (like “nothing” or “non-being”) is the predicate (attribute or species) used to describe and qualify the subject. In this way, “nothing” or “non-being” becomes the “predicate” of the “subject,” that is, “being”: being is “non-existent,” or being is “a species of non-being,” but no matter how, people do not understand it as: being as such is nothing.

Although Hegel’s “being” is most abstract, it is at the same time the richest. Because it potentially contains the possibility of developing into all later categories, it does not need to rely on anything outside of it to exercise its constitutive function. Hegel does not adopt the defining form of judgment to state the beginning of the *Science of Logic* precisely to compel people to focus on “being” as concept (in contrast to Kant, Hegel believes the ground of all knowledge is not the judgment but the concept), to see how it unfolds other categories from inside of itself, while putting out of consideration not only all contingent determinations coming from outside of itself but also all descriptions in the sphere of representation. Although “being” is abstract, it is not a static abstraction (like the Indian chant *Om, Om, Om* or the continuity of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi’s “original parting of judgment”: “an ‘is, is, is’ without beginning and end, without ‘what’, ‘who’, or ‘which’”⁴⁰), but is rather like Anaximander’s *apeiron*, the unlimited. Therefore, Hegel argues, it has no further determinations. This “being” contains immanent activity; such activity simply remains unexpressed at this stage of pure being; it is still only a possibility or immanent “resolve.” Therefore at this stage, it is first clinging to itself, taking place at the beginning of the *Science of Logic* in the manner of Parmenides’s being, but this by no means implies that Hegel’s being is Parmenides’s being. Hegel first cites Parmenides at the stage of pure being but does not mention the Ionian school of *apeiron* even in name, for

which he assuredly had his own reasons (the latter school excessively restricts itself to experience and representation), but because of which he becomes prone to misunderstandings and attacks. No one understands how a static and unmoving “being” could possibly move “itself” without being pushed into motion by an outside force. Trendelenburg’s misunderstanding is most typical of this. He asserts that the dialectical progression of being, nothing and becoming actually must presuppose a “representation” that is not clearly expressed, which is “movement.” He implicitly sneaks movement in from outside of the whole system. This idea also earned approval from Wilhelm Dilthey and others.⁴¹ Perhaps a greater loss incurred due to Hegel’s preference for Parmenides is that when he discusses the second category of “nothing,” he cannot find a corresponding historical counterpart in the history of Greek philosophy after Parmenides, which forces him to borrow an example from Asian Buddhism that is completely unrelated to Greek philosophy. This not only destroys his own principle of the unity of the logical and the historical but also brings about one eye-catching place of extrinsic coerciveness in the *Science of Logic*. Considering it from this angle, whatever Hegel gains from overvaluing the being of Parmenides, it does not make up for the loss.

However, in Hegel’s understanding, merely dwelling, like Parmenides, on the proposition “being is, nothing is not” cannot count as the true beginning, but merely as a static and unmoving “starting point.” A true beginning is a process, which is implied in that very first incomplete proposition of Hegel’s previously mentioned. When Hegel speaks of being “without further determination,” this is by itself already a determination of being. Being is the first determination, and this determination is “having no further determination.” Put otherwise, this determination of “having no further determination” is the determination of being. This is somewhat like a “semantic paradox,” like “the liar’s paradox”: a liar says: “I’m lying”; we cannot decide whether or not she is lying based on her statement because, regardless of whether we believe she is lying or telling the truth, we will in either case fall into self-contradiction. If we believe her to be lying, then we are affirming that her statement “I’m lying” is a true one, that is she is not lying; if we believe that she is not lying, then we must affirm that she “is lying” precisely as she said. Alfred Tarski suggests resolving this contradiction by distinguishing semantic levels, that is, by distinguishing “the object language” and “the meta-language” in the paradox. In the aforesaid example, we must differentiate the two levels of meaning in this sentence “I am lying,” one level as fact (she said this sentence “I am lying,” which is a fact) and the other level as assertion (the content of this sentence is the assertion that she herself “is lying”). People have also tried to deal with Hegel’s paradox by such means: when Hegel evokes being “without further determination,” he already makes a determination of being in fact, which is even the most unique determination: only “being” alone is “without further determination,” which is to say, being is “the most undetermined.” Based on this point, we could distinguish being and all other categorial determinations, preventing their confusion; however, what this determination

asserts is being “without determination.” Wieland understands this contradiction of Hegel’s beginning precisely from the standpoint of this semantic paradox, for which reason he advocates making the distinction between the proposition’s content and its form of expression: every expression we are looking for here itself differs from that which is meant and signified by it; people want to express the indeterminateness of pure being, but Hegel cannot possibly avoid making a determination of this being precisely because of this intention.⁴² He insists this is the reason behind Hegel’s unwillingness to begin with a complete proposition (so as not to disturb the “indeterminate” content that is expressed with the determinate form of the proposition). However, Wieland also (self-contradictorily) sees that the problem is not yet resolved even with the making of this distinction, for he discovers that Hegel does not want to avoid this contradiction. On the contrary, Hegel willfully intends to generate this contradiction, to give his category the force to move forward. Wieland asks why this contradiction, which has been so easily eliminated by means of distinguishing levels in the viewpoint on object language and meta-language, is given a pass.⁴³ Hegel seems not to be insisting on the distinction between the proposition or concept and its referent. His concept and that to which his concept refers are identical. He is not saying, “being” is devoid of determination in one sense and is determinate in another sense, but is instead saying: “being” is in the same sense both determinate and indeterminate. Wieland attributes this intentionally fabricated contradiction to the end point of Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, that is, the identity of thinking and being (form and content). The expression of this end in the beginning of the *Science of Logic* is the intentional confusion of these two semantic levels, for the sake of generating the contradiction and then (in order to calm down the contradiction) continually “repair,” supplement and reconcile the contradiction while simultaneously drawing out a whole chain of logical categories from it. This is also to say, Wieland believes contradiction (or better, artificially setting up and resolving contradiction) is the source of self-movement inside of logical categories as well as the source of necessity for this movement (or better, the cause of “being forced” to move, because contradiction is not allowed to exist and must necessarily be resolved). However, in his view, this contradiction is not spontaneously generated from the original nature of the concept at the end of the day, but is rather set up from the outside by a human being (Hegel himself). Thus, Wieland explains the beginning’s transition from being to nothing as the record of Hegel’s own exploration of thought, arguing that Hegel’s attempt is to formulate this being that he merely presented, or is rather, to give being a true object, but he fails, so he again attempts to qualify this fact in a different manner, for which purpose he takes up this external form of an ordinary proposition about being to state that “being is [...] nothing,” but nothing is only superficially speaking the noun of an ordinary predicate, which symbolizes nothing more than some kind of empty state and simultaneously implies that he has not, in fact, found for the predicate a true object or the right noun. However, he thereby reaches the second category in this way,

that is, the category of nothing. This category is not generated from being in any mysterious way, but is rather reflection's articulation of the failed attempt to make being a true subject, for which reason it seems the causal impetus of stepping outside of pure being comes from the outside.⁴⁴ Therefore, he argues, that in the sense of inside of the system, there is no category serving as the premise in the beginning, but there is actually a premise, which is someone trying to make a determination of pure being, and the category of "nothing" is only offered to the system's progression as a consequence of this attempt to make a determination.⁴⁵ This interpretation, which attributes the motivating force behind the progression of categories to the human operation of trial and error outside of the system, conveniently transforms dialectical contradiction into semantic contradiction so dialectical contradiction can be expelled from inside of the system.

However, the contradiction of Hegel's beginning can neither in fact be understood as a semantic paradox (we could argue the reverse, namely that any semantic paradox is on the contrary caused by the contradiction that a system's beginning necessarily contains), nor as an artificially fabricated contradiction. Wieland does not see that this is precisely the contradiction contained within the concept itself, and for precisely this reason it need not appear in the form of a complete "proposition" and a form of judgment; moreover, even if it appears in the form of a proposition, it is still no ordinary judgment, nor is it the extrinsic contradiction of two concepts, but is rather the self-contradiction of the same concept. In this proposition "I am lying," "I" is not "lying." These are two concepts contingently colliding together, but in the proposition "being is nothing," being and nothing are one and the same thing. This is not someone setting a nothing up in opposition to being, but is rather: being as the determination of having no determination is effectively the determination of nothing; it is nothing itself. In terms of understanding this point, Stace's mistake follows a path other than Wieland's misunderstanding but effectively to the same end. He clarifies the relationship of identity between being and nothing, not through being and nothing as concepts but as predicates of a judgment or proposition:

This is also evident if we take being as the predicate of a proposition. Reality, we might say, is being. This is only a tautological way of saying, reality *is*. In that form we see being is not a true predicate, but merely a copula. It does not define reality in any way, but leaves our knowledge of it completely empty. If we are told that reality is, we naturally ask, *what* is it? The predicate being provides no answer. Instead of a proposition in the form S is P, we have one in the form S is—, the predicate being represented by a blank which is equivalent to a cipher. This cipher, which is all being represents, is nothing. Being, then, is nothing.⁴⁶

This "simplification" of Hegel's philosophy is actually a poor vulgarization. It goes without saying that Hegel basically never says "being is nothing" in this sense of concrete things or predicates of something else. On the

contrary, Hegel also points out that one of the sources of confusion in this proposition is “consciousness brings with it, to such an abstract logical proposition, the figure of some concrete thing, forgetting that the issue here is not anything concrete but only the pure abstractions of being and nothing.”⁴⁷ Even the example that Stace cites does not add up. When someone asks (for example, a skeptic asks), “reality is or is not?” (this question undoubtedly must precede the question “what is reality?”), the answer “reality is” obviously determines reality in some way, and it is not merely a tautological formulation; it amounts to a strikingly different answer than that of “reality is not,” and the knowledge about reality that it provides us is not completely “empty” either. When the question is “what is reality?”, simply saying “reality is” (or “reality exists”) of course fails to provide a perfectly fitting answer, but it still does not amount to saying that this “is (exists)” is “a blank equivalent to a cipher” or “a nothing”; otherwise, “reality is” and “reality is not” are in all ways the same. This is substantively that infamous example raised by Kant, that 100 thalers exist or do not exist; it is only that Kant opposes the equating of the two based on common sense. Stace still confines himself to common sense, but the delusion is equating the two in this confinement.

If we must handle the proposition “being is nothing” with the “subject-predicate” (or “subject-object”) framework, then each is the subject of the other and each is the predicate of the other. Hegel points out that representational-thinking, “[s]tarting from the subject as if this were an enduring ground,” “on the contrary finds that, by the predicate being the substance, the subject has passed over into the predicate and has thereby become sublated.” The speculative proposition therefore undoes the posited difference of the subject-predicate relationship through the general judgment or proposition, which then “suffers, to picture it in this way, from a counter-punch.”⁴⁸ We could of course first make being the subject and nothing the predicate, but as soon as nothing appears as the predicate, it has already passed over into the subject: “being is non-existent” converts into “being as such is actually nothing.” Moreover, as nothing passes over into the subject, being passes over into the predicate of nothing; “being is nothing” turns into “nothing is existent.” For the same reason, “nothing is existent” immediately converts into “nothing as such is being.” Here, “immediately” neither has the significance of quickness in time, nor that of “inseparable” in logic, but is merely an intuitive formulation, because in Hegel’s view, this transformation of passing over has actually already been completed: “[t]he truth is neither being nor nothing, but rather that being has passed over into nothing and nothing into being—‘has passed over,’ not passes over.”⁴⁹ Yet, Gadamer argues on this basis that saying “‘Being passes into Nothing and Nothing passes into Being,’ is actually a quite untenable way of putting the matter, because a Being already present and distinct from Nothing would thereby be presupposed.”⁵⁰ This is overdoing it, however. Gadamer’s criticism of Hegel here only takes into account the facet of Being and Nothing as identical without seeing the facet of Being and Nothing as “absolutely differentiated.” Hegel reveals the sharpening of contradiction

between opposite categories inside of identity and the process of [the identity] acquiring its own force of movement forward. Therefore, the transition of “being is nothing” to “nothing is being” is an illegitimate reversal of subject and predicate from the perspective of formal logic in the same way that we cannot deduce the reverse proposition “a plant is a flower” from “a flower is a plant,” or deduce “red are flowers” from “flowers are red.” However, from the perspective of dialectical logic, the reversal and interchange of the subject-predicate relationship between categories is the essence of conceptual vitality.⁵¹ In H.F. Fulda’s estimation, 50 percent of sentences in the *Science of Logic* are “this is that” sentences that reverse the subject-predicate relationship.⁵² Fulda argues, the true sense of such sentences cannot be grasped from the superficial logic of linguistic form; on the contrary, they are an implicit employment of terms and concepts, and this implicit employment of terminology always follows specific linguistic conditions.⁵³ For example, when Hegel states “being is essence,” he actually cannot take “being” as the fixed subject and essence as the fixed predicate, because the two are originally one thing, not however in the tautological sense of ($A=A$), but rather insofar as there is internal differentiation; it states: being is not being, only essence is (in the true sense) being. Moreover, this proposition also differs from sentences of the type “Sir Walter Scott is the author of *Waverley*,” because on both sides of the “is” in such sentences we only find the difference of superficial forms (of address), which are effectively equal ($A=A$), and such kinds of equal relation depend on contingent empirical facts (of history) (because Scott in fact wrote this book *Waverley* and he alone), but have no intrinsic necessity, so what this equal relation determines is not some logical relationship but simply a fact.

Because of this, the motivating force and necessity of such a transition from “being is nothing” to “nothing is being” is not “injected” from the outside, but rather comes from these two concepts and, firstly, the self-contradiction inside of this concept of being itself. If we merely look at this self-contradictoriness from the perspective of the literal statement, it will be judged by formal logic as “impossible”; it will be maintained as self-contradiction and self-annihilation without any consequence (just as we today still have some critics who argue that Hegel’s pure abstract being, which is divorced from all concrete things, basically does not exist, but such critics do not understand that this is exactly what Hegel is saying; it is only that Hegel draws plentiful consequences out of it, while those critics are confined to merely declaring that this is all “nonsense” and nothing more). The true meaning of such a contradiction is not anything literal, but is implied by the literal surface; it is just like a “moral maxim” which “does not possess in the mouth of a youngster who otherwise understands it quite well the meaning and scope that it has in the spirit of a man with a lifetime of experience, to whom therefore the weight of its content is expressed in full force.”⁵⁴ Here, formal logic is tantamount to speaking out of “the mouth of a youngster,” whereas dialectical logic is “the spirit of a man.” Formal logic can only “see the contradiction,” whereas dialectical

logic can understand the deeper source of the contradiction and the intrinsic necessity of it taking place.

Since conceptual or categorial contradiction is, fundamentally speaking, intrinsic self-contradiction, this already by itself illustrates that the most profound origin of such contradiction stems from the dialectical essence of a category to negate itself, which is to say, contradictions (or the two sides who are contradicting each other) are not facts given beforehand but are actively posited by the category's self-negativity. At any rate, we will proceed with a more detailed account of this point in the following part. What we must touch on next is the third category of Hegel's logic, "becoming."

Being passes through its own self-negativity into nothing, while nothing likewise passes over into being, but these two concepts are themselves of the highest abstraction. In degrees of abstraction, they are found on the same level, that of "immediate transition." Such a transition "is not yet a relation."⁵⁵ At the very beginning, being "is the unity of being and nothing," and the same goes for nothing; each constitutes the "ground" and "cause" of the other, but even though being and nothing have identical degrees of abstraction, they differ with respect to logical order. Nothing ultimately emerges through the self-negativity of being. So among these two "unities of being and nothing," "the determinations are not of equal value."⁵⁶ Only the latter (non-being's) unity of being and nothing leads to a turnaround, a reflection, through which there is a total and concrete grasp of the interchanging and transitioning of being and nothing into each other, which is no longer the eternal cycle of being and nothing back and forth (without beginning or end), but is rather the existence of a certain order, that is, from nothing to being (coming-to-be) and from being to nothing (ceasing-to-be), which is "becoming" (alteration). Therefore, Hegel states: "[b]ecoming is the first concrete thought and hence the first concept."⁵⁷

In a sense, becoming is above all the true beginning, whereas being and nothing are only the premises of understanding this beginning that is becoming, because this concept of "beginning" is itself, as we have already argued, a concept of "becoming." We have, however, already demonstrated that we also cannot begin with becoming, even if becoming contains the meaning of beginning in-itself, because we cannot understand becoming if we do not understand being and non-being. Furthermore, becoming does not simply contain beginning (coming-to-be) alone; it also contains ending (ceasing-to-be); it is the unity of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be, a unity that ultimately "collects itself into quiescent unity."⁵⁸ Therefore, becoming cannot serve as the beginning (due to which it may dawn on us why Chinese philosophy so emphasizes change and the restless becoming of life, but still boils down to "quiescent unity," and cannot step away from the beginning). However, as we turn around from "becoming" and look back at the two categories of being and nothing, we will discover that these two categories of the highest abstraction, whose own determination is devoid of all determination, are only truly determined, posited and grounded for the first time through

“becoming” (or on this shared foundation of becoming). Because of this, being and nothing can only parse out as mutually differentiated, mediated and precisely determined categories from within becoming. Thus, we could also say only “becoming” is the true beginning, but it is not the beginning in the sense of “articulation” (we still can only begin from being in this sense); rather, it is the beginning in the sense of “reflection,” because it determines itself for the first time in relationship with the two categories and makes the two categories (being and nothing) pass over into each other, while it stands its own ground unmoving and thereby becomes the first certainly graspable determinateness, which is “determinate being” (*Dasein*), qualitative determinateness.

Especially worth noticing is that “becoming,” as the synthesis of being and non-being, is likewise not an extrinsic force, nor is it a force that “pieces back together” the irreparable disconnection of being and non-being “after-the-fact,” because becoming is effectively the beginning and returning of being as such back to itself as well as that negation and double negation of nothing for itself, it is both mediated (unlike being’s immediate) positivity and “the negative of the negative.” We still have to be aware that in Hegel, “all affirmation is negation,” but also that all negativity necessarily results in the negation of the negative, so all negativity is also positive (that “two negations equal one affirmation” in formal logic, here, is imbued with vivid content), and this affirmation mediated by negation is finally the true and concrete affirmation, because there is in fact nothing positive that does not alternate into something positive by developing.⁵⁹ As to why negation necessarily leads to the negative of the negative, this can be expected from the original nature of negation. When Hegel argues pure being is “*absolutely negative*, which when taken immediately, is equally *nothing*,”⁶⁰ he views nothing and the negative as one and the same in meaning, and therefore insists that nothing is “the abstract, immediate negation, the nothing purely for itself, negation devoid of reference—and this can also be expressed, if one so wishes, simply by saying ‘*nothing*.’”⁶¹ Previously, we drew attention to the simple immediacy of nothing and the negative, which made itself pass over into being and the positive. Although nothing, the negative “immediately vanishes into its opposite,”⁶² that is, for failing to posit its own independent determination, nothing succeeds in positing; however, the first true concept, “becoming,” through this vanishing into the opposite affirmation, and this becoming, in turn, makes nothing or the negative get its own independent determination distinguishing itself with “being.” Therefore, from the standpoint of becoming, the negative amounts to the active principle in alteration, and this is negativity’s essence. For this reason, Hegel also says: “In its highest form of explication nothing would be *freedom*. But this highest form is negativity insofar as it inwardly deepens itself to its highest intensity; and in this way it is itself affirmation—indeed absolute affirmation.”⁶³ The highest form of the negative is the negative of the negative (positivity), which here becomes an independent principle, that is, “freedom,” but it stems from the negative, nothing, or rather, “negation.” This source does not require extrinsic force to lend it positivity from the outside, for

it contains positivity within itself and the positing of this positivity (which is posited in becoming, or rather its positing is becoming) is the negative of the negative. It is only that this negative of the negative differs importantly from simple negation. The difference is that it is no longer the completely indeterminate, the “unlimited,” but rather a type of self-determinateness, which is “to refer itself to itself as restriction.” To state it figuratively, it is Heraclitus’s “fire,” or to use modern terminology, it is “self-regulation.” Classical German philosophy from Kant to Hegel attributes true freedom to self-regulation.

We specifically underscore this self-regulating characteristic of Hegel’s becoming, this activity of negated negativity inside of the self, because this concept of becoming is itself so easily (and very reasonably) understood either as “change” occurring due to the influence of external conditions or as some contingent effect of internal and external conditions piecing together. This understanding stops at the level of Heraclitus’s “unlimited” and fails to rise to the level of “referring itself to itself as restriction,” which Heraclitus’s “fire” and *logos* effectively substantiate. People often say, the internal cause is the ground of change; the external cause is the condition of change; and the external cause changes through the internal cause playing an effective role. This formulation is of course correct when speaking of a particular change of something (like a chick hatching out of a chicken egg). But when speaking of this category “becoming” in general, there is only one ground, which is the negativity of internal activity in need of no external conditions. External conditions can only restrict what it is that something concretely becomes (like a chick, a boiled egg, a rotten egg etc.), but cannot restrict something’s “becoming.” Even if an egg is placed in the freezer, it can only slow down its change. Another misunderstanding similar to the one above is that of becoming as a simple cyclical alternation between being and nothing without any certain direction. When Stace explains “being passing over into nothing” and “nothing passes over into being” in Hegel, he argues that passage is only “a logical or equational transition.”⁶⁴ He does not notice the framing that Hegel gives, that among these two “unities of being and nothing,” “the determinations are of unequal value.”⁶⁵ So when Stace explains the implication of Hegel’s “[i]n becoming [...] are only vanishing [terms],”⁶⁶ he presents two such equivalent equations:

Becoming is, firstly, the passage of being into nothing. But nothing *is* being. Therefore becoming is the passage of being into being. But this is not a becoming. Therefore becoming has disappeared. Becoming is, secondly, the passage of nothing into being. But being is nothing. Therefore becoming is the passage of nothing into nothing, which again is not a becoming. Becoming thus collapses.⁶⁷

From here he boils down the collapse of becoming to the collapse of the difference between being and nothing: “the difference *has* collapsed, for being and nothing are identical. Therefore becoming itself disappears and abolishes

itself.”⁶⁸ In this way, however, he reduces becoming to that original undifferentiated and unlimited state of being and nothing. Under this premise, after becoming passes away and “collapses,” how becoming can be “effected” (be limited) is no longer understandable by any means. Stace looks at it in precisely the following way. He argues Hegel’s deduction of “determinate being (*Dasein*)” from becoming is “shaky,” and Hegel’s recourse to metaphors like Heraclitus’s “fire” should “make one suspicious that they cover up a break in thought.”⁶⁹ This just illustrates that Stace fundamentally fails to grasp the substance of Hegelianism. Even though Hegel’s use of language here is highly obscure, he is not intentionally playing around with words. As long as we focus on grasping the moving force of forward progression and not cyclical movement (on this point, Hegel’s word “circle” is rather the source of easy misunderstanding) that runs through his categories of being, nothing and becoming, his train of thought becomes perfectly clear. In Hegel, the difference of being and nothing is posited in becoming.⁷⁰ It is precisely because this difference is determined (being is not nothing) that becoming contains within itself its opposite that is “not becoming”: this moment of coming-to-be (from nothing to being) does not equal the moment of ceasing-to-be (from being to nothing), because of which what coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be posit in becoming is “equilibrium” (*Gleichgewicht*), which “collects itself in quiescent unity.”⁷¹ Thus, even though becoming is itself a “restless flux,” “[b]ecoming is a ceaseless unrest that collapses into a quiescent result.”⁷² That is to say, becoming contains the equilibrium of being and nothing in coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be, which is determined “something,” that is, “determinate being” (*Dasein*, also translated as Being-there), which is not becoming in becoming, the passing away and vanishing of becoming. This is what is meant by “becoming therefore has a result,” which is not “the collapse of difference,” but on the contrary the positing of difference and hence the positing of “something” as well. Stace feels wonder at Hegel’s recourse to the metaphor of “fire,” which illustrates that he does not understand the thought of activity and self-determinacy implied by this metaphor.

This misunderstanding of Stace’s is not unrelated to his other misunderstanding of the progression of Hegel’s categories, which is that he merely understands categories from such concepts of formal logic as genus and species. Thus the *Science of Logic* becomes a process by which the philosopher (Hegel) extrinsically clarifies the mutual “containing” relationship between genus and species, instead of a process by which categories actively progress themselves. For example, he states: “Being is the genus. Becoming is a special kind of being and is therefore a species of it.”⁷³ The progression of being, nothing and becoming is a process of adding specific difference (nothing) to the genus (being) and deriving the species (becoming): “[b]y adding its negative, its opposite, to the genus, we limit it, and therefore determine it, and to determine it is to turn it into a species.”⁷⁴ From here, he insists that what drives the progression of Hegel’s categories is the law of contradiction in formal logic:

It is this very law which compels us to pass from the second to the third category of each triad. It is just because reason cannot rest in a contradiction that the contradiction between thesis and antithesis has to be resolved in the synthesis.⁷⁵

That is also to say, precisely because contradictions come into being in categories, “we” possessing reason cannot stop at contradiction, but are compelled to present a third category to dissolve the contradiction. Sometimes Stace acknowledges with respect to the former two categories of Hegel’s that “they deduce themselves.”⁷⁶ However, since it involves “adding its negative, its opposite, to the genus,” how is it possible that this negative (second category) can be “deduced” from the first category? As to the progression of the third category, Stace fully attributes it to the compulsion of “reason” to be intolerably repulsed by contradiction. Therefore, “[i]t will be seen that this entire process of categories is a compulsory process forced onwards by the compelling necessity of reason.”⁷⁷ Here, the activity, self-determination and free progression of the category is all but lost. This set of uniquely creative interpretations is completely non-Hegelian and a-dialectical, but is ludicrous when positioned within the treatment on “The Dialectical Method” in the first section of *The Philosophy of Hegel*! It seems that Stace only understands Hegel’s dialectic from the perspective of Plato’s early theory of Ideas (as on page 27 where he mentions Plato’s “Universals”). As to how Hegel elicits dialectical factors from Plato’s later thought like the *Parmenides*, Stace seems almost completely ignorant.

In summary, the proposition “becoming is the unity of being and nothing” obviously cannot be understood in the static sense to mean: there is a pre-given being and a ready-made nothing, or there is first a being, then a nothing is added to it and finally they are unified by becoming. Generally speaking, we also cannot understand the proposition “the unity of opposites” in this way either. Two opposites are not first given beforehand and then a unifier (a third) is sought afterward; neither is it the case that there are two opposites beforehand struggling against each other and then “one eats the other” or equally end up in exhaustion, giving birth to a third. On the contrary, it should be understood to mean: one and the same thing generates the opposite of itself (the negative) by negating itself, and then returns to itself (the negative of the negative).

These are not in contradiction through some external conjoining; on the contrary, as an examination of their nature shows, they are a transition in and for themselves; the synthesis and the subject in which they appear is the product of their concept’s own reflection.⁷⁸

Because of this, the key is not going outside of a thing to find its opposite, but rather to see how this thing ceaselessly moves and develops because it negates itself. This is the inspiration that the triadic progression of being, nothing and becoming gives us.

Ending as beginning

As we have mentioned, the beginning of Hegel's *Science of Logic* is linked together with the ending. In terms of articulation, the beginning is "being," and in terms of understanding, the beginning is "the Absolute Idea." The convergence of these two is what shapes the greater circle of the entire *Science of Logic*. Because of this, "that progression is a retreat to the ground, to the origin and the truth."⁷⁹ "This truth, the ground, is then also that from which the original first proceeds, the same first which at the beginning came on the scene as something immediate."⁸⁰ Although being is the immediate and thus the only possible articulation of the beginning, it is also the most abstract and most empty in terms of understanding; its concrete meaning is only conceptualizable in the most concrete sense at the end of the process, that is, in the Absolute Idea. This is why, when we talk about the beginning, aside from looking at the statements of how it begins to progress, we also must understand progression as a regression or return to its final ground, "the Absolute Idea." In principle, the true meaning of beginning is only completely revealed when the entire process is clear, but here we only need to see how it converges toward the beginning at the point where it ends to get a rough understanding of it.

In the final chapter, "The Absolute Idea," Hegel writes that "the Absolute Idea alone is being, imperishable life, self-knowing truth, and is all truth."⁸¹ The Absolute Idea alone is the subject matter and content of philosophy, but here, this content no longer has the shape of a content, "but [...] it is simply as form," that is, the Idea.⁸² That is to say, it takes up form as its own subject matter and object of investigation. This form is not here something that suddenly protrudes but is that which the entire *Science of Logic* has continually used from the beginning until this moment without being aware of it and without singly bringing it forth for consideration: it is the method. The method is not external to the content but is precisely the formal aspect of the content itself. For instance in "being," the beginning of the *Science of Logic*, we examine its contents: how being develops into nothing out of itself and then the transition of the two into becoming. We articulate this content, and this articulation proceeds based on the needs of the content's progression; but the form of this articulation is itself the method, and this method of articulation still cannot articulate itself when articulating the content. We should say, it still manifests as a "subjective reflection" during the beginning, an understanding that is external to the subject matter. Actually it is already the concept or Idea during that time, yet simply unable to know itself, "[b]ut in the idea of absolute cognition, the concept has become the idea's own content."⁸³ Passing through the progression of the series, the philosopher who wishes to grasp the "absolute" becomes aware that every method used previously to this point was not something subjective, but was the form embodied by this content as such, and moreover, the most intrinsic and most essential

soul of this content is the true content (the content of the content) and the true substance, because “nothing is conceived and known in its truth unless completely subjugated to the method; it is the method proper to each and every fact because its activity is the concept.”⁸⁴ Obviously the form (Idea) of which Hegel is speaking here is the form in the Aristotelean sense of *eidos*, which is the essence of every content (material) unfolding as an active process of actualization (*energeia*, realization). Hence, “the concept is all, and that its movement is the universal absolute activity, the self-determining and self-realizing movement.”⁸⁵

This form and this method occupy different roles and status at different stages of knowing. Hegel terms cognition of the Absolute Idea, in which the subjective and objective are identical, “the cognition of truth,” and that in which the subjective and objective are separated, a mode of cognition. Karl Leonhard Reinhold suggested philosophy ought first provisionally hypothesize a problematic beginning, then prove it step by step. This method of “proving” is entirely an instrument of the subject.⁸⁶ This is effectively the traditional method of “finite cognition.”⁸⁷ In this mode of cognition, the method is only a means posited by the subject to unite with the objective:

In true cognition, on the contrary, method is not only an aggregate of certain determinations, but the determinateness in-and-for-itself of the concept, and the concept is the middle term only because it equally has the significance of the objective; in the conclusion, therefore, the objective does not attain only an external determinateness by virtue of the method, but is posited rather in its identity with the subjective concept.⁸⁸

In Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, without this final stage of the absolute Idea, that is, without ultimately sublating the difference here between the subjective, external method and the objective concept, all cognition prior to this could still be treated as a mode of cognition; people would stop short at the stage of finite cognition, of external opposition between analysis and synthesis, and ultimately fall prey to Kant’s dualism. The Absolute Idea thus smooths out a final crack in the whole system and points out that the cognition of truth is already contained even in the beginning’s “pre-given” immediacy:

In fact, the demand that being should be exhibited has a further, inner meaning in which more is at issue than just this abstract determination; implied in it is the demand for the realization of the concept, a realization that is missing at the beginning itself but is rather the goal and the business of the entire subsequent development of cognition.⁸⁹

Because of this, the beginning (being) is posited as something abstract and “deficient,” which simultaneously means it is negative in-itself; it is “already posited afflicted by a negation.”⁹⁰ But this also implies that it is purposive

(because something is always said to be “deficient” relative to an end) and its content is essentially nothing more than the means or method to achieve that purpose. It is only that, at this stage of beginning such a method still takes up the subjective and external way of knowing, and the significance of the method is still implicit and hidden in “being” as such, which continues all the way until the final stage of the Absolute Idea, when its “purpose” is truly realized, when people suddenly realize that this purpose is originally nothing other than that method itself that had been implicitly contained in it. The whole process that develops out of “being” is but the process of this method emerging from darkness into the full light of day, and moreover, the whole of the *Science of Logic* is simultaneously cognition of “the absolute” and cognition of the process of coming-to-know the absolute (Truth); it is moreover “the science of method,” that is, “the science of logic” in the original sense of the terms, a genuine “organon.”

In this way, Hegel's Absolute Idea returns to its beginning. The beginning “being” ends up no longer immediately established by virtue of its own immediacy and indeterminacy, but ends up mediated, explained and intrinsically grounded. In the sunlight of the Absolute Idea, being shows its essence. That is, method, or rather, being is effectively method. “The method is the pure concept that only relates to itself; it is, therefore, the simple self-reference which is being.”⁹¹ Being is not a mathematical point, but a relation (self-reference), a circle that conjoins beginning and end, a complete system, which is also a system of method. So, what is this system or method?

Hegel's articulation of it is, “[t]his no less synthetic than analytic moment of the judgment through which the initial universal determines itself from within itself as the other of itself is to be called the dialectical moment.”⁹² That is to say, the true method, the dialectical method should be the unity of analysis and synthesis. We know that the distinction of analytic judgment and synthetic judgment is the starting point of Kant's argument (in *Critique of Pure Reason*). One question with the most crucial significance in Kant's epistemology is “how are synthetic judgments a priori possible?” It seeks to determine the conditions of possibility of judgments with both analytic necessity and synthetic expansiveness, but because his understanding of analysis is separate from his understanding of synthesis, synthesis is not contained in analysis and analysis is not contained in synthesis, such that he has no choice but to attribute the necessity of knowledge to the external (*a priori*) commanding role of the transcendental ego and the expansiveness of knowledge to empirical data continually being regulated by the same transcendental framework, but the external union of these two constitutes synthetic judgments a priori; it constitutes knowledge. Hegel basically accepts Kant's understanding in terms of the definition of analytic and synthetic. That is, analytic judgment is exhibiting that which is conceptually already contained in a concept, while synthetic judgment is the unifying of two concepts, neither of which contains the other, but Hegel undertakes the dialectical reforming of them. He no

longer examines analytic and synthetic in isolation from each other with respect to each's respective definition, but rather sees them as two sides of the same process or two ways of articulating it. By "the same process" we mean that process "through which the initial universal determines itself from within itself as the other of itself." By "two sides" we mean on the one hand:

To this extent the method of absolute cognition is analytic. That the method finds the further determinations of its initial universal simply and solely in this universal, constitutes the concept's absolute objectivity, of which the method is the certainty [...]⁹³

while on the other hand:

Equally so, however, is the method synthetic, for its subject matter, while immediately determined as the simple universal, through the determinateness which it has in its very immediacy and universality, proves to be an other.⁹⁴

That is to say, on the one hand, we could view all logical categories as those that are already (potentially) contained in the first category, and, without adding to it (synthetically) any unrelated determination from outside of it, we may "analytically" derive from it the whole system insofar as we singly consider this same category alone. On the other hand, those categories, which were derived from the first category, as well as each consequent category, all simultaneously stand in opposition and contradiction with it as its others or negatives. Hence, this continuous process of analytically deriving each category from itself is simultaneously that of metabolizing, harmonizing and synthesizing these opposites of itself in the determination of itself. After every category posits its own negative category, it must turn around and again negate this negative and thus constitute the starting point of a new forward progression. Therefore, the process of categories progressing forward is also that of the system continually "turning around" at each stage and finally achieving a complete return in the Absolute Idea.

We still must clear up here a confusion that may result. When Hegel spoke of the beginning, he underscored the unanalyzable nature of the beginning: "the beginning itself, is to be taken as something unanalyzable."⁹⁵ He opposed applying to the beginning of the *Science of Logic* the analytic method employed in other sciences:

[T]he connection contained within a concrete something, within a synthetic unity, is necessary only in so far as it is not found already given but is produced rather by the spontaneous return of the moments back into this unity, a movement which is the opposite of the analytical procedure that occurs rather within the subject and is external to the fact itself.⁹⁶

Elsewhere Hegel argues, however:

But if the subject matter were in fact treated analytically in this manner, it would belong to that stage of the idea considered above, a mode of cognition that searches for its subject matter and only states of it what it is, without the necessity of its concrete identity and of its concept.⁹⁷

This very easily leads people to believe Hegel generally (at least in the beginning) opposes the use of the analytic method, but Hegel in fact only opposes deriving the beginning from the analysis of some sort of supposedly well-known concrete things, all of which come with the contingency of sensuous representation and none of which are pure categories precisely because they have not been deduced. As such, they cannot serve as the beginning (because they are impure) any more than the beginning could be elicited by analyzing them (because they are presupposed), but Hegel never opposes the activation of internal self-analysis (differentiation) once the beginning is posited, that is, the activity of sequentially displaying all of those categories potentially comprehended in the beginning itself. On the contrary, he examines in detail how analysis and synthesis are presented in each triad throughout the logical progression.

First, Hegel points out, “a universal *prius*, considered in and for itself, proves to be the other of itself.”⁹⁸ This “other of itself” is the second, that is, the “negative” of the first; but it is no alien negativity coming from outside of itself, “but is rather the other of the first, the negative of the immediate.”⁹⁹ It is the self-negativity of the first, because of which, even though the first negates itself, it is still preserved in this negative in sublated form, “[t]o hold fast to the positive in its negative, to the content of the presupposition in the result, this is the most important factor in rational cognition.”¹⁰⁰ Hegel says such negativity “constitutes the turning point of the movement of the concept. It is the simple point of the negative self-reference, the innermost source of all activity, of living and spiritual self-movement; it is the dialectical soul.”¹⁰¹ He insists that this self-negativity as the first premise of movement, “may be regarded as the analytic moment.”¹⁰² What is termed analytic here is not artificially dissecting an integrally complete object or approaching the object from the outside to extract components contained in it, but is rather the object self-differentiating into its opposite, which is based on the object’s own most inward essence, that is, the impulse to negate itself and transcend itself. On the very first page of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel inscribes Heraclitus’s admonition in Greek: “ψυχῆς ἐστὶ λόγος αὐτὸν αὐξῶν”; “To the soul belongs a report (*logos*) that increases itself.”¹⁰³ It is unfortunate that the Chinese translation fails to render this. Insofar as this action of the object negating and exceeding itself is nothing more than the self-deepening of the object, this action is analytic. In what follows, Hegel again points out,

The second negative at which we have arrived, the negative of the negative, is this sublating of contradiction, and it too, just like contradiction,

is not an act of external reflection; for it is on the contrary the innermost, objective moment of the life of spirit by virtue of which a subject is a person, is free.¹⁰⁴

The second negation of the former negation (the negative of the negative) is the “second premise” of conceptual movement, which could be determined as “synthetic,” because it returns to immediate unity the two contradicting opposites derived from the differentiation. This synthesizing or unifying is not repairing two conflicting things while standing outside of the conflict. On the contrary, it is making of itself a principle of “absolute negativity”; it is the same thing turning around to transversally link up its own prior two moments, because of which it “is the unity which is subjectivity and soul.”¹⁰⁵ If we compare the articulations of these “two premises,” we may see the first premise (the negative) is a “simple point,” “the innermost source” of all activity, which amounts to spontaneous activity; the second premise (the negative of the negative) is the most “objective moment,” which posits the subject, personality and self-regulation (that is freedom). Of course, this division of analysis and synthesis (the negative and the negative of the negative) is entirely relative as well. In Hegel, this neither means “first analyze then synthesize,” nor does it mean there is no synthesis in the analysis or analysis in the synthesis. Hegel does acknowledge that such one-sided understandings of analysis and synthesis have their own scope of application in “finite cognition,” which may reach truth as long as it chooses whichever method (analysis or synthesis) is appropriate to fit “the form of the objects themselves that cognition aims at.”¹⁰⁶ But, then again, Hegel believes this separately making us of analysis and synthesis “cannot be used for philosophical cognition.”¹⁰⁷ Hegel does not forget to remind us of this when lecturing on “the analytic moment” of the first premise in philosophical cognition, “though this connection, as already remarked, is for this very reason also synthetic, for it is its other that it passes over into.”¹⁰⁸ When lecturing on the synthetic, he likewise conveniently mentions that it is also analytic: “the method of truth that comprehends the subject matter, though analytic as we have seen, since it remains strictly within the concept, is however equally synthetic, for through the concept the subject matter is determined as dialectical and as other.”¹⁰⁹ Now we have to make this division of two stages (two premises), analytic and synthetic, for no other reason than to show that although the two are inseparable and interdependent, they are far from cyclically alternating on a plane, but are rather a process of development, a process with a certain direction and purpose, a process of advancing from analysis, this internal “source,” to synthesis, this objective “system.” Even though analysis and synthesis pervade each other and are inseparable in this process, analysis mainly shows its advantages first and then synthesis shows its advantages second, just as the category must first differentiate itself and only then realizes that the other coming out of this differentiation is originally the other of itself, for which reason it then reintegrates this other back into itself.

In summary, this set of dialectical methods is also in Hegel the complete demonstration of the beginning, and it coincides with the beginning in the most actual way (in the Aristotelian sense of actual). In other words, the beginning at first only seems to make various determinations of the immediate presentation of abstract “being,” but in truth, the beginning makes actual usage of the dialectical methods just mentioned. Such actual employment is likewise the most immediate. It is just that it only manifests at the very beginning as the subjective immediacy in the perception of the one who “resolves” to philosophize; it is the first immediate response that he makes when faced with the object of his consideration; it is the appropriate treatment of those categories (being, nothing, becoming, determinate being etc.) in correspondence with the determinateness of each, but by the end of the *Science of Logic*, this method that rises in the philosopher’s consciousness through its consistent application is that which becomes the object of consideration (here there again arises the phenomenon of “semantic paradox” that we mentioned previously: considering the method as such makes use of the very method that is under consideration. It is just that we already know how to cope with it.) Subjective and objective are identical, the philosopher’s method and his object are identical, thinking and being are identical, which is “being” that is “fulfilled.”¹¹⁰ It is the “self-liberation” and “conceptualization” of being. When “being” thus fulfilled becomes a pure subjectivity (divine subjectivity), the whole *Science of Logic* comes to completion while the Idea and the method return back to the beginning and also make a new beginning. This beginning that has undergone mediation can no longer repeat the path that the *Science of Logic* has already taken (because the illumination of the method as such is negation, creation and activation), but there is an impulse to negate and sublate its own subjectivity, so it discharges itself into freedom as “Nature.”¹¹¹

Therefore, the return to the beginning is the new beginning of another field, which is immediately existing Nature. Vladimir Lenin’s evaluation of this goes: “That is excellent! But it is materialism.”¹¹² Marx also points out: “Thus, the entire logic is the demonstration that abstract thought is nothing in itself; that the Absolute Idea is nothing for itself; that only *nature* is something.”¹¹³ That is to say, the true beginning should be Nature, but Hegel obviously holds that, since Nature in-itself is “demonstrated” by the entirety of the *Science of Logic*, it can only be the deformation of this logical Idea. We will analyze his reasoning later. Here, we have the need to further penetrate into the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the premise of the *Science of Logic*, so as to catch a glimpse of how the thought of “the beginning” there is manifested and what differences it has with the *Science of Logic*.

Notes

1 Ibid., 19.

2 Ibid., 32.

3 Hegel 2010, 29.

- 4 Hegel 1991, 39.
- 5 Mueller 1971, 18–33.
- 6 Hegel 2010, 33.
- 7 Ruben 1978.
- 8 Hegel 2010, 47.
- 9 Hegel 2018, 466.
- 10 Hegel 2010, 55.
- 11 Hegel 1991, 65.
- 12 Ibid., 176.
- 13 Hegel 2010, 50.
- 14 Ibid., 310.
- 15 Ibid., 308.
- 16 McTaggart 1988, 58.
- 17 Stace 1955, 111.
- 18 Ibid., 112–3.
- 19 Ibid., 113.
- 20 Hegel 2010, 50.
- 21 Ibid., 46.
- 22 Hegel 1991, 41.
- 23 Russell 1945, 832.
- 24 Ibid., 567.
- 25 Ibid., 567.
- 26 Hegel 2010, 48.
- 27 Bubner 1978, 111.
- 28 Hegel 2010, 80.
- 29 Hegel 1991, 143.
- 30 Hegel 2010, 750.
- 31 Ibid., 52.
- 32 Hegel 2010, 55.
- 33 Ibid., 50.
- 34 Hegel 2018, 466–7.
- 35 Hegel 2018, 467.
- 36 Hegel 2010, 47.
- 37 Wieland 1978, 195.
- 38 Hegel 2010, 67.
- 39 Hegel 2010, 69.
- 40 Hegel 2010, 73.
- 41 Gadamer 1976, 10.
- 42 Wieland 1978, 199.
- 43 Ibid., 195.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid., 201.
- 46 Stace 1955, 136.
- 47 Hegel 2010, 62.
- 48 Hegel 2018, 38.
- 49 Hegel 2010, 59–60.
- 50 Gadamer 1976, 51.
- 51 See (Hegel 2018, 100) and *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. 4*.
- 52 Fulda 1978, 54.

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- 53 Ibid., 53.
- 54 Hegel 2010, 37.
- 55 Ibid., 78.
- 56 Ibid., 80.
- 57 Hegel 1991, 144.
- 58 Hegel 2010, 81.
- 59 Hegel 1991, 152.
- 60 Ibid., 139.
- 61 Hegel 2010b, 60.
- 62 Ibid..
- 63 Hegel 1991, 140.
- 64 Stace 1955, 136.
- 65 Hegel 2010, 80.
- 66 Hegel 1991, 145.
- 67 Stace 1955, 139.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid., 140.
- 70 See (Hegel 1991, 146).
- 71 Hegel 2010, 81.
- 72 Ibid., 81.
- 73 Stace 1955, 92.
- 74 Ibid., 94.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid., 92.
- 77 Ibid., 94.
- 78 Ibid., 744.
- 79 Ibid., 305.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ibid., 735.
- 82 Ibid., 736.
- 83 Ibid., 752.
- 84 Ibid., 737.
- 85 Ibid., 737.
- 86 Ibid., 304.
- 87 Ibid., 738.
- 88 Ibid., 738.
- 89 Ibid., 739.
- 90 Ibid., 739.
- 91 Ibid., 752.
- 92 Ibid., 741.
- 93 Ibid., 741.
- 94 Ibid., 741.
- 95 Ibid., 52.
- 96 Ibid., 52.
- 97 Ibid., 748.
- 98 Ibid., 744.
- 99 Ibid., 744.
- 100 Ibid., 744.
- 101 Ibid., 745

- 102 Ibid., 746.
- 103 Heraclitus 1981, 75.
- 104 Hegel 2010, 746.
- 105 Ibid., 746.
- 106 Hegel 1991, 296.
- 107 Ibid., 299.
- 108 Hegel 2010, 746.
- 109 Ibid., 748.
- 110 Ibid., 752.
- 111 Hegel 1991, 307.
- 112 Lenin 1930, 252.
- 113 Marx & Engels 1988, 163.

4 Analyzing the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

We analyzed the beginning of Hegel's *Logic* in the previous chapter. We have tried to follow what Hegel means and explain his own thought, while avoiding distortions and misunderstandings of him. We have tried not to read him superficially, but now we have to step outside the circle defined by Hegel's thought and view the beginning of Hegel's philosophy from beside it. A problem first appears to our mind in this way: where does the first, most immediate, abstract, pure concept, the absolute beginning, "being," come from? Hegel seems to have explained this by himself. According to him, "being" is the original concept encountered at the level of "pure knowledge," "for pure knowledge is the ultimate and absolute truth of consciousness,"¹ which is the end result of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "[I]ogic has for its presupposition the science of spirit in its appearance."² However, he also insists that this presupposition should be "forgotten" and "abandoned." As he criticizes Fichte's "empirical" self-consciousness: "Determining pure knowledge as 'I' acts as a continuing reminder of the subjective 'I' whose limitations should rather be forgotten."³ Clearly enough, in his opinion, he is not bound by that past presupposition (*Phenomenology*) as he proceeds with the study of pure knowledge,

In that new shape of spirit, it likewise has to begin all over again without prejudice in its immediacy, and, from its immediacy, to rear itself again to maturity, as if all that had preceded it were lost to it and as if it were to have learned nothing from the experience of the preceding spirits.⁴

The empirical form of phenomenology is only again "recollected" in Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*, but it is no longer stated as the premise and beginning, but merely as the subjective form of spirit that follows after "anthropology." Therefore, in the beginning of the *Science of Logic*, when someone (the philosopher) suddenly sets out to explore the alien realm of pure knowledge one must abandon previously acquired experience insofar as past knowledge is rendered obsolete. One must abandon it until nothing remains but a naked "resolve." However, how this pure "resolve" is to relinquish the system of pure truth remains a mystery, or at least, it remains a mystery as to how the

absolute Idea could relinquish nature relying on this “resolve” alone. People have spoken much about the latter mystery with no shortage of criticism, but the former mystery has never been sufficiently unraveled in the meantime. The two mysteries are effectively the same mystery, which is the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as “the empirical science of consciousness.” We owe Marx (and Feuerbach) for revealing this.

In *Philosophic and Economic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx refers to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* as “the true point of origin and secret of the Hegelian philosophy.”⁵ We will discuss what Marx truly means by this statement later. For now, we only need to know that Marx regards the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the beginning of Hegel’s entire philosophy and for this reason, when we discuss the beginning of Hegel’s philosophy, we cannot unconditionally begin with the *Science of Logic* as Hegel thinks and “abandon” or “forget” what it presupposes, that is, the *Phenomenology*. On the contrary, we must carefully enter the *Phenomenology* as the *Logic*’s “presupposition.” In other words, we cannot just treat it as the “Introduction,” but must truly regard it as the “first part” of the entire system. In this way, the problem of “the beginning of Hegel’s philosophy” becomes that of “the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.”

Historical justification for the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Now, when we go back to the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we necessarily run into another problem: Is the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the first beginning? Does it itself have any presupposition? This seems somewhat boring as a question, because such retrospection appears endless. That is, the nature of the problem in this very retrospection unknowingly transcends the scope of philosophy and all cognition. But this is exactly the crux of the problem. Philosophy comes from non-philosophy or from the rich cultural soil of an era. Hegel is strongly self-conscious of this, which his long preface “On Scientific Understanding” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* demonstrates when he begins with the era, that is, with the urgent problems and critical ground of the spirit of the times, while expounding the ground and necessity of the “empirical science of consciousness” (the *Phenomenology of Spirit*) along with the characteristics that distinguish it from the prejudices, old ideas and methods of the times. As a result, we are led, and by no means misled, into the field of the culture and history of the times. To the contrary, this just shows that Hegel’s philosophy, especially the active dialectic in it, is not the result of pure speculation or even the by-product of breakthroughs in natural science, but is instead the blossom that had burst forth out of the dialectical evolution of history and matured from Hegel’s accurate perception of this very evolution and from Hegel’s sociohistorical perspective on it. When we head backward along the course of Hegel’s thinking, we must meet the point where the entirety of Hegel’s philosophy began to grow. This

point was his genuine feeling about the urgent needs of the times and his overall evaluation of the development of history. This point is clarified in the preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the presupposition of Hegel's entire philosophy.

This preface is divided into four parts in the Chinese translation:

1. The Tasks of Contemporary Science
2. The Development from Consciousness to Science
3. Philosophical Cognition
4. The Demands of Philosophical Investigation

Among these, the atmosphere of the times is thickest in the first part, where the author's sense of a historical mission in writing the book is most directly communicated. The second part expounds a new concept of "science" and illustrates that the pursuit of scientific knowledge since the birth of the modern era (Descartes) has been nothing more than the preparation or "education" necessary for the study of this new concept. By the time of Hegel, in his understanding, this education finally reaches completion such that the critical moment has come for spirit and substance to become knowledgeable of itself and conscious of itself, and what remains to be done is to explicate the process of spirit's development from consciousness to science by way of a new scientific method. The third part criticizes the main prejudices of the philosophy of the times with regard to the concept of truth and method, namely the prejudices of metaphysics and mechanics. The third part proposes that philosophical knowing is grounded in "the concept" along with its vital movement and thus constitutes philosophical knowing's veracity (the identity of thinking and being) along with its logical necessity. The fourth part clarifies the logical principles of conceptual thought and "speculative thought" and critically exposes the narrowness of formal logic so as to avoid the fallacies of normative thinking in the name of either "common sense" or "inspiration." At the end, Hegel reverts back to the beginning of his historical mission, full of confidence in his work. Between the lines, we can see that this sense of mission and confidence runs throughout the preface. We will focus our analysis of the preface on this aspect.

At the beginning, the preface states how to write a philosophical preface, which is Hegel's unique method of narration: no matter which beginning, he begins with the beginning itself. Hegel points out that it would be inappropriate for philosophy to explain the concepts of its science beforehand and develop its own system in the same way as each of the other extant concrete sciences. This way of presenting principles and making judgments is the work that needs to be done, for instance "at the beginning of the culture" (referring to ancient Greek philosophy), which is easier:

However, the commencement of cultural education will first of all also have to carve out some space for the seriousness of a fulfilled life, which

in turn leads one to the experience of the crux of the matter, so that even when the seriousness of the concept does go into the depths of the crux of the matter, this kind of acquaintance and judgment will still retain its proper place in conversation.⁶

Hegel is referring here to the journey of thought and culture from the Christian Middle Ages to modern times. This is the journey of the “understanding” of concepts and judgments, which is “much more difficult to get a real grip on.” But this work has also already been accomplished by history, “and what is the most difficult of all is both to grasp what unites each of them and to give a full exposition of what that is”; “[t]he true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of that truth.”⁷ So Hegel presents the task of his book: “To participate in the collaborative effort at bringing philosophy nearer to the form of science.”⁸ He believes that descriptions of the task cannot be made in advance, and “rely on solely the exposition of philosophy itself.” But this is not to say such philosophical exposition cannot provide any kind of external defense. On the contrary:

However, external necessity, insofar as this is grasped in a universal manner and insofar as personal contingencies and individual motivations are set aside, is the same as the internal necessity which takes on the shape in which time presents the existence of its moments.⁹

In other words, the philosophical exposition can find the proof of its internal necessity in the necessity of real historical development:

To demonstrate that it is now time for philosophy to be elevated into science would therefore be the only true justification of any attempt that has this as its aim, because it would demonstrate the necessity of that aim, and, at the same time, it would be the realization of the aim itself.¹⁰

From here, Hegel introduces his consideration of contemporary culture. He criticizes German Romanticism, which was the predominant trend of thought at the time, for trying to avoid the hard work of the concept and for thinking that one could transcend secular life and grasp transcendent truth on the basis of the feeling of joy and from the inspiration of wild passion, on the basis of the intuition of the absolute and from the experience of essence. This, for Hegel, was nothing but a reaction to the spirit of the Renaissance, namely to secularism and rationalism. Hegel also pays attention to this trend of thought, thinking on the one hand that it marks the stage at which “self-conscious spirit” presently finds itself, that it has already exceeded the “substantial life” and abandoned this useless “empty shell,” “rather, it demands that it again attain the substantiality and the solidity of what is, and that it is through philosophy that it attain this.”¹¹ On the other hand, he points out that spirit was too impatient in doing so. Instead of doing actual scientific

work, spirit had been hoping to run across some sort of accidental, sacred revelation: "It is profundity itself, and, viewing determinateness (the *horos*) with contempt, it intentionally stands aloof from both the concept and from necessity, which it holds to be a type of reflection at home in mere finitude."¹²

This "intemperate enthusiasm," believing that "as long as you blind your self-consciousness and give up your intellectuality, you belong to God," is actually just a dream. Although Hegel does not name him, his words are aimed at Friedrich Schelling, the philosophical spokesman of Romanticism at that time. When he sent Schelling a sample of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he wrote in the letter that he believes Schelling would not find that he went too far when addressing him in the preface, speaking to the void of spirit that "renders his formulas nonsensical and his theory a desiccated formalism."¹³ Schelling in his reply decidedly rejects these remarks and demands Hegel to clarify himself. The interchange between the two ended here.

Next, Hegel then positively clarifies "the truth as principle and its development." Here Hegel writes a passage praised both as "one of the most outstanding remarks of all classical German philosophy" and as "the key to understanding the *Phenomenology of Spirit*"¹⁴:

It is not difficult to see that our own epoch is a time of birth and a transition to a new period. Spirit has broken with the previous world of its existence and its ways of thinking; it is now of a mind to let them recede into the past and to immerse itself in its own work at reshaping itself. To be sure, spirit is never to be conceived as being at rest but rather as ever advancing. However, just as with a child, who after a long silent period of nourishment draws his first breath and shatters the gradualness of only quantitative growth—it makes a qualitative leap and is born—so too, in bringing itself to cultural maturity, spirit ripens slowly and quietly into its new shape, dissolving bit by bit the structure of its previous world, whose tottering condition is only intimated by its individual symptoms. The kind of frivolity and boredom which chips away at the established order and the indeterminate presentiment of what is yet unknown are all harbingers of imminent change. This gradual process of dissolution, which has not altered the physiognomy of the whole, is interrupted by the break of day, which in a flash and at a single stroke brings to view the structure of the new world.¹⁵

Dramatic changes in society and history were the intrinsic motivations prompting Hegel to explore the truth. As some have pointed out: "The real purpose of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is nothing more than to make a philosophical argument for the birth of this new world."¹⁶ Of course, Hegel does not get rid of it once and for all, but instead develops the idealist conception of history in the field of social history on the grand scale. That is, he posits reason and spirit as the ultimate substance and subject of all historical development. In this regard, Hegel arguably did not transcend those

uncritical preconceptions that he so criticized, that is, those beginning with “opinion” or definitions. However, it is important to see here that Hegel does not regard his system as a genius creation of his own mind but as an inevitable product of the development of social history up to a certain stage. He made the grounds, “proofs” or justifications of his philosophy transcend abstract arguments about purely linguistic issues of definition and purely logical problems of infinite regress. He turns people’s eyes toward the real, living tides roiling the era, toward the intrinsic law of social history and the contemporary manifestations of it, which made the ground of his system reach far higher than all other thinkers past and contemporary, such that Engels would insist his way of thinking is grounded in a greater sense of history.

Hegel insists that this entirely new world is imperfect at the beginning just as science does not emerge in perfect form at the beginning either. The newly emerging shape of consciousness has only just broken free of the old determinateness and fixed relations and has not yet been able to give new determinations to its own history at a new height and thus to all past shapes of spirit. Therefore, the new shape of consciousness is still, at the beginning, merely an indeterminate concept awaiting determination, both abstract and empty (like Schelling’s absolutely undifferentiated identity). “Science has no general intelligibility,” and “it seems to be the esoteric possession of only a few individuals,” “only what is completely determinate is at the same time exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and possessed by everybody.”¹⁷ Therefore, in Hegel’s view, the urgent task of contemporary thought is to posit the new conceptual determinations after breaking the old formal determinations (mainly the metaphysical way of thinking since Descartes). This is the question he raises beforehand in preparation for the second, third and fourth parts. He stresses: “Everything hangs on grasping and expressing the true not just as substance but just as much as subject.”¹⁸ He points out the major yet neglected significance of movement, mediation and negation as the essential, as the realistic moment and moment of active freedom. However, he also insists that the development from substance to subject, from being in-itself to being for-itself, from the unchanging formal viewpoint to the dialectical viewpoint that transcends itself and negates itself is the process of the genesis of knowledge. What the *Phenomenology of Spirit* describes “is the very ground and soil of science, or, knowing in its universality.”¹⁹ The *Phenomenology* describes history not only as the generative process of the formation of human knowledge but also as that of “individual education.” Engels points out:

The development of a concept, or of a conceptual relation (positive and negative, cause and effect, substance and accident) in the history of thought, is related to its development in the mind of the individual dialectician, just as the development of an organism in palaeontology is related to its development in embryology (or rather in history and in

the single embryo). That this is so was first discovered for concepts by Hegel.²⁰

Indeed, Hegel believes, “the individual whose substance is spirit standing at the higher level runs through these past forms in the way.”²¹ It is only in the individual where the past stages of knowledge, unlike the stages that human knowledge initially experienced qua species, become outer shells that spirit sheds, degrading into primary-level training and childhood education. Modern people no longer need to explore the unknown world as the ancients did; they no longer need to experience the confusion and distress that those with past forms of knowledge did; they no longer need to commit the same mistakes and veer off onto the detours taken. Modern people do not need to personally deal with the facts of concrete existence. We can already read the final results of all of this in books and textbooks. So, “[i]n this movement, although the individual is spared the sublation of *existence*,”²² what the individual is not spared is the task of revising and absorbing these historical facts and results at a contemporary level, that is of analyzing and synthetically grasping them in the effort of making rigid rules of thought “fluid” and of making them become the self-movement of substance and the living process of self-actualization. This is the task undertaken by the *Phenomenology*, but it is also what we must undertake now in the contemporary era.

Hegel also believes that in order to undertake such tasks, thought must not stay in the fixed oppositions of the past between truth and falsehood and between historical knowledge and mathematical knowledge, but must attain “conceptual knowing.” He criticizes Kant’s formalism and rigid faculty of understanding, but also opposes “that its place ought be swapped for the un-method that bases itself on either vague sentiments or on inspiration,”²³ insisting that “[s]cience may organize itself only through the proper life of the concept.”²⁴ This concept is the unity of affirmation and negation, substance and subject, existing and thinking; it integrates the opposing sides into itself and adds to them a comprehensive view of the whole. Hegel views such conceptual thought (or speculative thought) as the requirement in philosophical investigation, comparing it to formal deductive thought. He points out the difference and incompatibility between the two. He also points out the rightful scope of formal deduction and its narrowness:

Comprehending thinking conducts itself in quite a different way. While the concept is the object’s own self, or the self which exhibits itself as the object’s coming-to-be, it is not a motionless subject tranquilly supporting the accidents; rather, it is the self-moving concept which takes its determinations back into itself.²⁵

Here, in addition to seeing Hegel fight against the prejudices of metaphysics (which is, of course, an important theme throughout his entire philosophy), one should also see the special role that it plays in the preface, which is to defend

and justify the beginning of his entire philosophical system. Specifically, “how to begin” is only a problem with respect to external form in formal deduction, and because it is the cause of infinite regress, it is also a problem of irresolvable contradiction.²⁶ However, in conceptual thinking, because the subject matter and content are regarded as “the concept,” this problem no longer remains a problem, for on the one hand, the issue of “how to begin,” which only seems to refer to the form of articulation, and actually hinges on the content itself, but on the other hand, a consideration of merely the content itself will, out of necessity, intrinsically set its own beginning, because the content is not a material sitting there waiting for people to process it, but a living movement that rushes into the head of a speculative philosopher, compelling her to begin with herself. Therefore, philosophers can only start where the content and subject matter compel themselves to begin. This belief in the absoluteness and necessity of the content and subject matter is the true source of Hegel’s rare sense of history and of an historical mission. From this, we can also gain a deeper understanding of what Hegel means by the following:

I can thereby also hope that this attempt to vindicate science’s right to the concept and to expound science in this, its own distinctive element, will know how to force its way through the crowd by way of the inner truth of what is at stake. We must hold on to the conviction that it is the nature of truth to prevail when its time has come, and that it only appears when its time has come, and that it thus never appears too early nor does it appear for a public not yet ripe enough to receive it.²⁷

This means that the beginning of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and indeed of his entire philosophy is not one that is arbitrarily formulated by Hegel himself; rather, the beginning at this point in time is the “emergence” of “truth.” This defense of the beginning of Hegel’s philosophy is also mounted for the whole of thought as a process: the entire process of thought that follows: Hegel himself is but describing this great cause of universal spirit, where the beginning begins:

At a time when the universality of spirit has grown so much stronger, and, as is fitting, when what is purely singular has correspondingly become even more a matter of indifference, [...] then the share in the total work of spirit which falls to the activity of any individual can only be very small.²⁸

This statement shows both Hegel’s modesty as well as his conceit.

The beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

The beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* shares a consistency with that of the *Science of Logic*. In this relationship of consistency, we will temporarily leave the question of who is emulating whom aside for discussion later. At the very least, because we have already examined the reasons why Hegel

begins with “the most immediate,” “the most abstract” and “what is present” in the *Science of Logic*, we do not need to repeat these reasons here. Just as the *Logic* takes “pure knowledge” as the subject matter and posits the category of “being” as the beginning, the *Phenomenology* takes human experience and consciousness as the subject matter and posits “sensuous-certainty” as the first phenomenon under consideration. One difference, however, is that when the *Logic* demands people to set aside every and all opinions and conceptions that they often have and only consider or accept the currently present,²⁹ one subjective presupposition still remains there, which is the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as precisely that which this “objective” attitude of pure knowing presupposes. Conversely, the *Phenomenology* begins by asking people, “we ourselves have to conduct ourselves immediately, or receptively. We therefore are to alter nothing in the object as it presents itself, and we must keep our conceptualizing of it apart from our apprehending of it.”³⁰ At this moment, the presupposition is no longer opinions or subjective thoughts, but (as mentioned previously) real sensuous life. Although along the journey of conscious experience, this realistic and perceptual life is gradually incorporated into the scope of subjective thoughts and ideas, and reaches the identity of the subjective and objective (absolute knowledge), at this initial stage, Hegel at least stresses the immediate feeling of real life, which is “sensuous-certainty” or “sense-certainty.”

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* begins with a dialectical analysis of “sensuous-certainty,” which covers the concept’s relation to the object from beginning to end, unlike the analysis of “being” in the *Logic*, which is purely limited to the relation of one concept to another. This situation will continue until the entire stage of “consciousness” ends and the stage of “self-consciousness” begins. At the stage of “consciousness,” Hegel mainly analyzes how consciousness incorporates its object into itself and how consciousness actualizing itself is the “truth” of the object. This characteristic presents in the chapter of “sensuous-certainty,” where Hegel turns sensuous-certainty into a universal, a universal “this” or “being” by drawing on a means of conversion and the movement of dialectical analysis:

The concrete content of sensuous-certainty permits itself to appear immediately as the richest cognition, [...] In addition, it appears as the most veritable, for it has not omitted anything from its object, but rather, has its object in its complete entirety before itself. However, this certainty in fact yields the most abstract and the very poorest truth. It expresses what it knows as this: It is; and its truth only contains the being of the item. For its part, consciousness only is in this certainty as the pure I, or, within that certainty, the I is only as a pure This, and the object likewise is only as a pure This.³¹

Sensuous certainty amounts to nothing more than saying “This!” when pointing at something, but when I say “this,” the “This” is no longer the same;

it changes, at least in terms of time, such that it is not the first “this” you pointed to, but another “this” (which reminds us of Heraclitus’s adage: you cannot step into the same river twice). Originally, when I say “this” in reference to the object, the object does not appear to exist by virtue of “referring” to it, but now, the original object no longer exists; it only exists in what I “meant” when “referring” to it, so the original relationship between knowing (I) and object is flipped around,³² because what is meant cannot be said. All that is said is the universal. What I meant when I said “This” was not expressed through “This,” and when I later again say “this,” what is meant already changes, even though the “this” does not change. Every naming of sensuous-certainty: white, soft, smooth, “the paper” or “this piece of paper” and so on are all universals; none can express this meaning that this “I” sensed at this particular place and time. So for what is meant, the “This” that was originally meant to express sensuous-certainty immediately becomes “not This.” That is, the “This” only continues to exist because it constantly negates sensuous-certainty; it is a negative This, a process of movement: “It is clear both that the dialectic of sensuous-certainty is nothing but the simple history of its movement (that is, its experience) and that sensuous-certainty itself is nothing but just this history.”³³

Obviously, the cancellation of sensuous-certainty’s objectivity standing independently of me is achieved by leveraging those words “write down” and “say.” Hegel argues:

language is the more truthful. In language, we immediately refute what we mean to say, and since the universal is the truth of sensuous-certainty, and language only expresses this truth, it is, in that way, not possible at all that we could say what we mean about sensuous being.³⁴

Precisely for this reason, sensuous-certainty loses its objectivity and veracity and passes over into “what is meant” behind the words, where it is finally incorporated by consciousness:

because the sensuous This, which is what is meant, is inaccessible to the language which belongs to consciousness, or to what is in itself universal [...] what is called the unsayable is nothing other than the untrue, the irrational, what is the merely fancied.³⁵

Here we can clearly see the linguistic origin of Hegel’s idealist dialectic and the characteristics of *logos*-ism. This cancellation of the objective truth of the sensuous by *logos*-ism is different from what comes about through the extreme empiricism of George Berkeley and David Hume. The latter eliminates the objective truth of the sensuous by reducing all rational, universal and abstract ideas to human beings’ subjective sensuous impressions, the result of which is the tendency toward skepticism; The former cancels the objective truth of human beings’ subjective sensuous impressions by reducing them to universals

and universal concepts, the result of which is the tendency toward absolute idealism. Hegel also criticizes empiricist philosophy in the last two paragraphs of the “Sensuous-Certainty” chapter. The weapon he uses is the nature of “language” as universals and concepts. “Speech itself has the divine nature of immediately inverting the meaning, then of making it into something else, and in that way of not letting the meaning get into words at all.”³⁶ In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel repeatedly borrows this inverting function of language to realize the passage from outside to inside or from inside to outside.³⁷ Here is where language plays the most crucial role in this true beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the entirety of Hegelian philosophy.

In addition to language's role of inverting what is meant, there is another hidden yet even more intrinsic driving force at the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is the existential motivation. It is as if, out of convenience we should mention what Hegel says when criticizing empirical philosophy:

We may be permitted to anticipate some concerns in the practical sphere. In this respect, what one can say to those who make assertions about the truth and reality of sensuous objects is that they should be sent back to the most elementary school of wisdom, namely, to the old Eleusinian secrets of Ceres and Bacchus, and that they have yet to learn the secret of the eating of bread and the drinking of wine. This is so because the person who has been initiated into these secrets not only comes to doubt the being of sensuous things, but rather arrives at despair about them, in part he brings about their nothingness, and in part he sees them do it to themselves.³⁸

In fact, the “practical” secret of “the eating of bread and the drinking of wine” that Hegel so despises is precisely the innermost ground of why his “sensuous-certainty” can pass over into the universal (such that it is not at all a matter of “anticipating some concerns”). This practical secret is: changing sensuous things, negating them, in order to sustain one's own existence. “For example, here is the tree. I turn around, this truth vanishes.”³⁹ Not bad. But why should I “turn around?” It just means that I am alive, that I turn around either to do something else, or just because I cannot stand the monotony and stiffness of immobility. “The Now, which is the night, is preserved, i.e., it is treated as what it was passed off as being.”⁴⁰ Not bad. But why should I “turn around?” This is “moving” or “working” in the general sense. Primitive man's record keeping by knotting rope was just such work, and language itself is the product of this work as well as its accompaniment (tool). Obviously, if I do not turn around, “and it is not the case that I turn around so that the Here would become for me not a tree, or that I myself at another time take the Here not to be a tree,”⁴¹ and by extension, if I were to reach a Zhuangzi-esque “sitting in forgetfulness” where “self transforms with matter”—that is, were I to eliminate all differences between matter and self and isolate from others

and society at large—I would not only fail to find the movement of sensuous-certainty, but I could not resolutely hold to the “immediacy” of sensuous-certainty itself either (even though Hegel thinks it is possible), because in this way, the sensuous thing does not “mean” anything to me (if there is still a “me”!). There would be no way to posit the difference between “This” and “That” (or the “This” by itself). In a word, language would be totally unnecessary. Sensuous-certainty is posited precisely amid change, amid uncertainty; I cannot posit it standing firmly there all alone (even for a moment). If I were born to hear only one sound, I would not hear any sound; if I were born unable to “turn around” and only saw that tree, I would not see it as a tree. I would only have the “sensuous-certainty” of this tree, this house, this day and so on, amid alternative trees and houses, amid the changing of nights and days (they would not “vanish” or “not exist”). This is the original sense of Hegel’s principle (that “determinate being” [*Dasein*] is established through “becoming”). He however abandoned it during this beginning. Only animals or perhaps only the human being whose “self transforms with matter” stands firmly there all alone. For a lion, there is no difference between two equally hunger-relieving pieces of meat. For the lion, there are only two types of things in the world: hunger relieving and not hunger relieving, and what is not hunger relieving is not worth noticing, so it does not exist. Therefore, food exists, whereas the sensuous-certainty of food and what it “means” does not exist. The same goes for human beings who are alienated, as Marx states: “The care-burdened man in need has no sense for the finest play; the dealer in minerals sees only the mercantile value but not the beauty and the unique nature of the mineral: he has no mineralogical sense.”⁴²

One of Hegel’s big mistakes was to conflate the sensuous–practical activity of human beings with animal instinct. He went on to say in the previous paragraph:

Nor are the animals excluded from this wisdom. Instead they prove themselves to be the most deeply initiated into it, for they do not stand still in the face of sensuous things, as if those things existed in themselves. Despairing of the reality of those things and in the total certainty of the nullity of those things, they without any further ado simply help themselves to them and devour them.⁴³

In fact, however, we do not have animal instinct to thank for the sensuous still having certainty, as Hegel proposes here. Instead, we are indebted to the infinitely rich sensuous meanings hidden underneath the linguistic level for that. These meanings are not “unspeakable” in principle, but only “inexhaustible” in language; we can only speak of them through symbols, metaphors, hints and implications, poetry. As Croce points out:

Language is essentially poetry and art: by language, or by artistic expression, we grasp individual reality, that individual shading, which our spirit

intuits and renders, not in terms of concepts, but in sounds, tones, colours, lines, and so on. For this reason, language, understood in its true nature, and in the full extent of its meaning, is adequate to reality. The illusion of inadequacy arises when the term language is applied to a fragment of this full meaning, and when that fragment is separated from the organic whole to which it belongs.⁴⁴

This quite accurately reveals Hegel's misunderstanding of language. The role of language is not merely to form a universal, which adds an external norm to the meaning, but also to express what this person means (mood, desire, feeling) at this time, this place; not only does language allow people to attain scientific accuracy and consistency with abstract general concepts, but it also allows one's soul to communicate with another (empathy). Hegel seems to believe that the power of emotion and the richness of sensibility have neither reality nor meaning without the norm of the concept. Although he is not entirely wrong, we must not write off the content of human nature (human sensibility) under the concept,⁴⁵ or vanish it under the umbrella of "animality." We know how the poetic tendency of modern philosophy was to unearth the "original" content of humanity from "the old Eleusinian secrets of Ceres and Bacchus," from precisely such primitive myths and mysteries that Hegel derogates as "the most elementary school of wisdom." Modern philosophy in this sense is a reaction to Hegel's rationalism. We will demonstrate later that even Marx's critique of both Hegel's dialectic and his entire philosophy began with this crucial reversal.

In any case, despite Hegel's contempt for human beings' sensuous practice, he ultimately does not completely deny the "wisdom" of this sensuous practice from the immediate level of linguistic (which in his view is) universal consciousness. The two statements of his cited above show that he actually sees this wisdom as a self-evident presupposition. He felt it beneath him to discuss this presupposition, and merely when arguing with others told everyone to start by learning "the eating of bread and the drinking of wine," but this just shows some sort of internal ground that Hegel himself had not explicitly formulated, that is, the concept's connection to human beings and to the sensuous activity of the sensuous person (the sensuous is necessarily personal). This sensuous activity, this "movement of coming-into-being and ceasing-to-be" but constitutes "the actuality and the living movement of truth"; "the truth is the bacchanalian revel where not a member is sober, because, in isolating himself from the revel, each member is just as immediately dissolved into it—the ecstasy is likewise transparently and simply motionless."⁴⁶ The "bacchanalian revel," that is, the common "truth" of each member taking part in the drunkenness, or by extension, what is shared in common by each moment of the truth, by each and every concept, not only fundamentally arises from the coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be of appearances and sensuous activity but also is expressed by the poetic abundance of the metaphor "the

secret of drinking” (even though it is grounded in concepts). The “transparent” relations internal to the conceptual totality (the Truth) can only be understood by way of the heart-to-heart intimacy (empathy) that links one human being and another within sensuous activity. Secretly acknowledging this connection between the conceptual and the sensuous, and considering it the ground and motivation behind the movement and dialectical development of “sensuous-certainty” severs this connection in words, however; it sublates and dissolves the rich meaning captured by sensuous-certainty within the concepts and universals of abstract consciousness. It boils off everything unspeakable (or the uncategorizable and inexhaustible) in the distiller of science and reason—this is the secret of speculative philosophy (more on this later).

Indeed, what we see in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the *Science of Logic* and indeed, in all of Hegel’s philosophy, is the same formula. The first is the immediate, the abstract, the positive, that which is in-itself, which by itself is only a universal, a word. The second is the mediation of the first, the negative, that which is for-itself, the life of the particular and the innermost source of movement, the soul of the dialectic, which preserves the first positive in-itself (otherwise, it would become empty “nothing,” the unspeakable). Then it is the third, the negation of the negation, which posits the unity of the first two and constitutes the objective moment of life and spirit, because it reverts back to the immediate determinability, and as the concrete and singular, it provides the first term of the next syllogism (which in this sense could be seen as the fourth). In such a strict deduction, the movement is always logically determinable (sayable) and can never escape the universal framework of the concept. Philosophical categories thus constitute an exact scientific system with logical necessity.⁴⁷ This formula illustrates that in Hegel here movement (life) is legitimately introduced and recognized solely on the ground of the concept alone and is ultimately reduced to the prescriptiveness of the concept. In this way, although the “concept” becomes “concrete,” movement and life itself are abstracted; it is no longer the real human activity of first-person, sensuous life, but has become a “self-movement” of the abstract concept making itself concrete. Visibly, even though the existential impulse constitutes the inner soul of life and movement in Hegel’s system, it is ultimately suffocated and sacrificed by the inverting function of a powerful *logos*-ism.

This is the embryonic form of the entire speculative secret that we see at the beginning of the *Phenomenology* in the “Sensuous-Certainty” chapter. We may come to understand through our explanation of it why the *Logic* is externalizable from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and why Nature may externalize out of the *Logic*. The first system exposes the speculative riddle. As Marx argues, the first person to reveal the secret of speculative philosophy was Feuerbach, who subtly draws out the basic keys to the critique of Hegel’s speculative philosophy and indeed of all metaphysics.

Why is the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the true point of origin and secret of Hegel's philosophy?

Marx calls the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the true point of origin and secret of Hegel's philosophy? What does this mean in the end? Most insist that by "point of origin," Marx means that all of Hegel's philosophy is already contained in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in embryonic form, such that we may view it as the foreword or abstract of the entire system. As to the "secret" of Hegel's philosophy, there are many different articulations of it (for instance, "alienation," "the dialectic of the negative," "the subjectification of substance," "the identity of thinking and being," the source of the dialectic etc.), but they all roughly mean the same thing, which is that the innermost source of Hegel's dialectic is presented and established in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I believe these interpretations are all undeniable with respect to the self-understanding of Hegel's system and the structure it expresses. However, precisely because of this seamless correspondence with Hegel's self-understanding, people have almost completely overlooked how far these interpretations deviate from Marx, in whose interpretation there is included a critique of Hegel's very self-understanding: "True point of origin?" On the face of it, this implies there is a false or superficial point of origin of Hegel's philosophy somewhere. "Secret?" This implies we still have to pierce through and remove what is covering it and make it expose itself. Who is the target of this critique? No one else but Hegel's self-understanding. Arguably, this critique, that is, of the true point of origin and secret of Hegel's philosophy, is the theme that Marx develops in his critique of Hegel's dialectic and of his entire philosophy.

We have already analyzed the beginning of Hegel's *Logic* in the previous chapter. We may also argue that from the perspective of Hegel's philosophy already constituting a system, the beginning of the *Logic* is the beginning of his entire philosophy, because it is clear that Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* systematically begins not from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* but from the *Science of Logic*. In response to this, Marx comments:

Hegel's *Enzyklopädie*, beginning as it does with logic, with pure speculative thought, and ending with absolute knowledge—with the self-conscious, self-comprehending philosophic or absolute (i.e. superhuman) abstract mind—is in its entirety nothing but the display, the self-objectification, of the essence of the philosophic mind, and the philosophic mind is nothing but the estranged mind of the world thinking within its self-estrangement—i.e., comprehending itself abstractly.⁴⁸

What Marx means here is: owing precisely to the fact that Hegel begins in *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* with absolute, abstract, superhuman and thus intangible philosophical speculation, that is, with the *Science of Logic*, this abstract, Absolute Idea of his makes a fascinating and bizarre mystery for the Hegelians.⁴⁹ It is this superficial point of origin (the *Logic*) of

the Hegelian system that hides the “objective absolute spirit” of the substance of Hegelian philosophy in a mysterious fog. Pointing out the true point of origin of Hegel’s system and showing Hegel’s abstract, superhuman, absolute spirit was not really all that elusive from the very beginning, saying that one may concretely grasp it in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in the philosopher’s experience of self-consciousness—this by itself reveals the secret of Hegel’s philosophy. Clearly, by the “true point of origin” of Hegel’s philosophy, Marx is exposing its secret location, which amounts to a critique of Hegel’s dialectic and his entire philosophy.

Looking at Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* from this perspective, we take up a position that is far from Hegel’s understanding of himself, namely: Instead of treating the *Phenomenology* as the “pre-scientific” “introduction” to Hegel’s whole philosophy, we consider the *Phenomenology* to be Hegel’s implicit understanding of his abstract logical system, to be the true footnotes to the *Logic*, the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, the true beginning and ultimate secret of his entire system. This is the true overcoming of Hegel’s philosophy, which the indispensable presupposition for the re-inversion of the inverted form of Hegel’s dialectic.

This is precisely what Marx does. He exposes the true point of origin of and secret to Hegel’s philosophy in the following way:

Consequently, despite its thoroughly negative and critical appearance and despite the genuine criticism contained in it, which often anticipates far later development, there is already latent in the *Phänomenologie* as a germ, a potentiality, a secret, the uncritical positivism and the equally uncritical idealism of Hegel’s later works—that philosophic dissolution and restoration of the existing empirical world.⁵⁰

Note that the negative dialectic is seen here as the “appearance” of the *Phenomenology* (rather than as the secret to Hegel’s philosophy); the secret underneath this appearance is: the abstract idealist source of his later system is enveloped in the *Phenomenology* as the embryonic form or germ of it. Hegel insists for his own system on merely accepting what is presently available to consciousness.⁵¹ He avows such an objective, empirical attitude, but he begins with “objective” absolute knowledge or “being,” which immediately appears and ends with “objective” absolute spirit. All of this comes from this objective idealist consideration. So where does this “objective” spirit come from? This is the question we asked at the beginning of this chapter. Once we ask where this objective absolute spirit comes from, we already have within our grasp the whole point of Hegel’s philosophy. Exposing the true point of origin and true beginning of Hegel’s philosophy in this apparently seamless circular system provides the condition for answering the previous question. Marx’s analysis shows that the total categorial demonstration of Hegel’s *Logic* is actually nothing more than the dismemberment of the human empirical consciousness that is given in the *Phenomenology*. The philosophy of nature and

philosophy of spirit that arrive later as “the *Logic* applied” are conceptual and philosophical restorations of this experience in abstract consciousness. The draft for this dismemberment was already sketched out in embryonic form through the *Phenomenology*, because the latter is nothing more than the philosophical processing and abstraction of present experience in subjective consciousness; it gradually opposes in a step-by-step process this alienated abstract consciousness and sensuous-experience and dissolves ultimately the latter in the passage of abstraction. Hegel’s mistake is twofold.

The first emerges most clearly in the *Phänomenologie*, the birth-place of the Hegelian philosophy. [...]The philosopher—who is himself an abstract form of estranged man —takes himself as the criterion of the estranged world. The whole history of the alienation process and the whole process of the retraction of the alienation is therefore nothing but the history of the production of abstract (i.e. absolute) thought—of logical, speculative thought. The estrangement, which therefore forms the real interest of this alienation and of the transcendence of this alienation, is the opposition of in itself and for itself, of consciousness and self-consciousness, of object and subject—that is to say, it is the opposition between abstract thinking and sensuous reality or real sensuousness within thought itself.⁵²

In other words, Hegel’s “first mistake” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* was to tailor sensuous reality beforehand using the measuring sticks of his own abstract thinking (universals), which turned them into nothing more than the history within abstract concepts. Sensuous reality hence becomes the history of abstract thinking:

All other oppositions and movements of these oppositions are but the semblance, the cloak, the exoteric shape of these oppositions which alone matter, and which constitute the meaning of these other, profane oppositions. It is not the fact that the human being objectifies himself inhumanly, in opposition to himself, but the fact that he objectifies himself in distinction from and in opposition to abstract thinking, that constitutes the posited essence of the estrangement and the thing to be superseded.⁵³

This abstract thinking originally comes into being from the inverting function of language, then it becomes independent, and by alienating, it becomes that which supersedes sensuous meaning, at which point, it turns back into the substance and subject of true reality. As the representative of this abstract thinking, the philosopher strips free from real social life and sensuous activity to engage the activity of “pure thought,” which by itself has already turned him into estranged man, who, however, uses the measuring sticks of his own thought in this alienated shape to measure and regulate

real history such that every negation and critique that this philosopher makes proceeds under the presupposition of the uncritical “pure thought.” In this way, there is no wonder why the *Logic* is externalizable from the conclusion of the *Phenomenology* by aid of “resolve,” because the *Logic*, that is, “pure thought,” was already transcendently applied in the *Phenomenology* as the measure long ago in premeditated fashion. In the *Science of Logic*, this measure or standard becomes no longer applicable for measuring anything else; it merely reveals itself without mediation and that is all. Since the speculative philosopher or his abstract logical speculation had already been applied as the standard measure in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the truth should already have been effectively pre-constituted before this. Therefore, though Hegel declares that truth is not “stamped coin” in the *Phenomenology*,⁵⁴ Marx derisively characterizes the *Logic* as the money of the spirit or the mind’s coin;⁵⁵ it still assumes itself to have the essence of “absolute standard,” and effectively is nothing more than the abstract representative of spiritual value.

The second mistake that Hegel makes, in Marx’s view, presents in the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit (the *Logic* applied), which show the approach of abstract idealism when the essential powers of man are regained and sensuous reality is restored. Everyday naive consciousness disregards Hegel’s abstractions, demanding the sensuous world of objects be returned to humanity, for which reason, after Hegel estranges the real world into the philosopher’s abstract thinking and logical Idea, he cannot but consider restoring the image of the sensuous world of objects. However, in Hegel, this regaining of the essential powers of human being or his interpretation of this process reads as follows:

Sense, religion, state power, etc., are spiritual entities; for only mind is the true essence of man, and the true form of mind is thinking mind, the logical, speculative mind. The human character of nature and of the nature created by history—man’s products—appears in the form that they are products of abstract mind and as such, therefore, phases of mind—thought-entities.⁵⁶

This unravels the second mystery of Nature externalizing out of the logical Idea: this Nature, which has been externalized, is not that sensuous natural world that so colorfully smiles at the whole body and mind of the human being, the one with which people interact in the process of sensuous activity; it is only the natural world of abstract spirit. The logical Idea releases from itself the meaning of Nature, but this meaning is only the philosopher of pure thought thinking of Nature by way of pure thought, and he therefore thinks of Nature for the reason that he senses “nothing” in the Absolute Idea. “The mystical feeling which drives the philosopher forward from abstract thinking to intuiting is boredom—the longing for a content.”⁵⁷ However, “so by letting it emerge from himself he has really let emerge only this abstract nature, only nature as a thought-entity.”⁵⁸

Marx says, with respect to these two mistakes, "all the illusions of speculation are brought together."⁵⁹ On the one hand,

That self-conscious man, insofar as he has recognised and superseded the spiritual world (or his world's spiritual, general mode of being) as self-alienation, nevertheless again confirms it in this alienated shape and passes it off as his true mode of being—re-establishes it and pretends to be at home in his other-being as such. Thus, for instance, after superseding religion, after recognising religion to be a product of self-alienation, he yet finds confirmation of himself in religion as religion. Here is the root of Hegel's false positivism, or of his merely apparent criticism: this is what Feuerbach designated as the positing, negating and re-establishing of religion or theology.⁶⁰

We once argued that, at the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel replaces the sensuous "this" that is overflowingly meaningful with the abstract universal "this," which poses as sensuous reality and living activity, then makes it become the "object" of consciousness by aid of words so as to absorb it into consciousness itself. When this abstract concept that is taken as sensuous-certainty once again becomes the starting point of the philosophy of nature by way of "intuition," the germ of "pure thought" that is inherent to it becomes the indelible mark of the whole life that unravels from it, because it emerges at the beginning, at the point of origin, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

In Hegel, therefore, the negation of the negation is not the confirmation of the true essence, effected precisely through negation of the pseudo-essence. With him the negation of the negation is the confirmation of the pseudo-essence, or of the self-estranged essence in its denial; or it is the denial of this pseudo-essence as an objective being dwelling outside man and independent of him, and its transformation into the subject.⁶¹

Marx unravels this mysterious secret of Hegel's philosophy in even clearer fashion in *Die Heilige Familie*. He points out in the "Mystery of Speculative Construction" section that Hegel actually makes a general idea (like fruit) abstracted from concrete things (like apples and pears) stand as an independently existing essence or "substance" that is divorced from concrete things, and through the self-progression of this abstract substance he superficially appears to return the concrete (apples, pears etc.) to the general idea and do away with the empty abstraction,

Thus it is really only in appearance that he rises above his abstraction [...] by giving the names of the real things to what abstract reason alone can create, to abstract formulas of reason [...] finally, by declaring his own activity, by which he passes from the idea of an apple to the idea of a pear, to be the self-activity of the Absolute Subject, "the Fruit" [...] and this comprehension constitutes the essential character of Hegel's method.⁶²

Marx also concretely analyzes this process of inversion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

In Hegel's *Phänomenologie* the material, sensuously perceptible, objective foundations of the various estranged forms of human self-consciousness are allowed to remain a mere determinateness of self-consciousness, and can therefore also dissolve its opponent, which has become ethereal, in the "ether of pure thought." The *Phänomenologie* is therefore quite consistent in that it ends by replacing human reality by "absolute knowledge"—knowledge, because this is the only mode of existence of self-consciousness, and because self-consciousness is considered the only mode of existence of man—absolute knowledge for the very reason that self-consciousness knows only itself and is no longer disturbed by any objective world. Hegel makes man the man of self-consciousness instead of making self-consciousness the self-consciousness of man, of real man, i.e., of man living also in a real, objective world and determined by that world. He stands the world on its head and can therefore in his head also dissolve all limitations [...] The whole of the *Phänomenologie* is intended to prove that self-consciousness is the only reality and all reality.⁶³

It should be clear that our previous analysis of the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is consistent with this. The content of sensuous-certainty (meaning) is thus "put out of consideration" and seems to be conquered because it has been turned into a word, a universal, and is not worth mentioning. It is this inversion of standing things on their head that constitutes the mystery of speculative construction.

Marx criticizes and overcomes Hegel's system of speculative idealism by revealing the "secret" or unraveling the mystery of Hegel's philosophy, but during the very same process, Marx also discovers the rational core that Hegel expresses only in inverted form—negative or critical dialectic. He asserts:

The *Phenomenology* is, therefore, an occult critique—still to itself obscure and mystifying criticism; but inasmuch as it keeps steadily in view man's *estrangement*, even though man appears only in the shape of mind, there lie concealed in it *all* the elements of criticism, already *prepared* and *elaborated* in a manner often rising far above the Hegelian standpoint.⁶⁴

The elements of this critique target the alienating essence of capitalist society. The speculation of abstract philosophy is intimately tied to the economic relations of real society:

Hegel's standpoint is that of modern political economy. He grasps labor as the essence of man—as man's essence in the act of proving itself: He sees only the positive, not the negative side of labor. Labor is man's *coming-to-be for himself* within *alienation*, or as *alienated* man. The only labor which Hegel knows and recognizes is abstractly mental labor.⁶⁵

The transcendence of self-estrangement follows the same course as self-estrangement.⁶⁶

National economy pushes the opposition between alienated labor and human beings to the extreme, which provides the necessary precondition for the communist theory of labor. Hegel pushes speculative philosophy, that is, the opposition of the alienated shape of the human being over and against the sensuous human being, to the extreme, and thus prepares the groundwork for the Marxist dialectic of the real human being and of the sensuous practical activity of real humanity:

The outstanding thing in Hegel's *Phenomenology* and its final outcome—that is, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle—is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-genesis of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and as transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of labor and comprehends objective man—true, because real man—as the outcome of man's own labor.⁶⁷

The real, active orientation of man to himself as a species being, or his manifestation as a real species being (i.e. as a human being), is only possible by his bringing out of himself all the *powers* that are his as the *species* man—something which in turn is only possible through the totality of man's action, as the result of history—is only possible by man's treating these generic powers as objects: and this, to begin with, is again only possible in the form of estrangement.⁶⁸

The active, negative dialectic—labor, along with its objectification and alienation—sublation of alienation—man, real human species-being: these are concepts of the same level in both Hegel and Marx. The difference is that Hegel only sublates alienation fully within the scope of alienation, and only overcomes the opposites belonging to itself in abstract consciousness, so his “person” is only an abstract, alienated person—a speculative philosopher—and the highest category of reality is absolute spirit standing over and above individuals while dissolving their free initiative, which is to say, God. Marx begins with the sensuous activity of real human beings and sees through the analysis of actual social history the prospect of sublating alienation and actualizing the species-essence of humanity. He thereby rescues the ultimate fruit of Hegel's philosophy from itself, namely the dialectic of negativity as the motivating principle and creative principle.

Notes

- 1 Hegel 2010, 46.
- 2 Ibid., 47.
- 3 Ibid., 54.

- 4 Hegel 2018, 466.
- 5 Marx & Engels 1988, 145.
- 6 Hegel 2018, 5.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid., 5–6.
- 9 Ibid., 6.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid., 7.
- 12 Ibid., 8.
- 13 Hegel 1981, 94.
- 14 Xin 1986, 484.
- 15 Hegel 2018, 9.
- 16 Ru 1986, 485.
- 17 Hegel 2018, 10.
- 18 Ibid., 12.
- 19 Ibid., 16.
- 20 Engels 1934, para. 24.
- 21 Hegel 2018, 18.
- 22 Ibid., 19.
- 23 Ibid., 30.
- 24 Ibid., 33.
- 25 Ibid., 38.
- 26 Ibid., 41.
- 27 Ibid., 45.
- 28 Ibid., 45.
- 29 Ibid., 52.
- 30 Ibid., 60.
- 31 Ibid., 60.
- 32 Ibid., 63.
- 33 Ibid., 66.
- 34 Ibid., 67.
- 35 Ibid., 67–8.
- 36 Ibid., 62.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid., 66.
- 39 Ibid., 62.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid., 64.
- 42 Marx & Engels 1988, 109.
- 43 Hegel 2018, 66–7.
- 44 Ainslie 1915, 125.
- 45 In this respect, Hegel does restore emotion and passion with certain status, for instance in his aesthetics.
- 46 Hegel 2018, 29.
- 47 Hegel 2010, 745–750.
- 48 Marx & Engels 1988, 146.
- 49 Ibid., 164.
- 50 Marx & Engels 1988, 148.
- 51 Hegel 2010, 54

- 52 Marx & Engels 1988, 147–8.
- 53 Ibid., 148.
- 54 Hegel 2018, 24.
- 55 Marx & Engels 1988, 146–7.
- 56 Ibid., 148.
- 57 Ibid., 164.
- 58 Ibid., 165.
- 59 Ibid., 157.
- 60 Ibid., 158.
- 61 Ibid., 159.
- 62 Marx & Engels 1977, ch. 5.
- 63 Ibid., ch. 8.
- 64 Marx & Engels 1988, 148–9.
- 65 Ibid., 150.
- 66 Ibid., 99.
- 67 Ibid., 149.
- 68 Ibid., 149–50.

5 Comparison of methods

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*

Although we have only analyzed the beginnings of the *Science of Logic* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we have a general understanding of the methods of these two works. Thus, we can also make a preliminary comparison. The purpose of this comparison is to gain an overall comprehensive grasp of the dialectical method, that is, to understand the method itself as a unity of contradictions.

We have already learned that Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* begins by presupposing an uncritical standard that is effectively forced upon sensuous determinations and phenomena of mind from the outside, which it processes and refines selectively. This standard is abstract consciousness, and the measuring sticks are abstract universals. Thus, in the *Phenomenology* there is only the difference and opposition between "us" (investigators) and "objects," an opposition which is not only that in the content investigated (as we have already pointed out), but also that in the form of the investigation. Inversely, in the *Logic*, now that this standard preexisting in us has become the object of investigation, the previous opposition vanishes. Even though we can for this very reason single out this standard of ours to consciousness for investigation, thanks solely to already having acquired by habituation this standard beforehand in the *Phenomenology*, we are still investigating this standard with the very same standard. It becomes clear from this that there is a relationship of mediation between the method of investigation (the standard) and the object of investigation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, while in the *Science of Logic* this relationship is one of immediate self-relation: the investigation of the standard logically deduces from itself the standard's investigation of the standard, but the former relation is mediated only for the reason that the investigator immediately posits some sort of pre-constituted standard when investigating the object; the latter relation is immediate solely for the reason that this standard already underwent the process of mediation of being used and acquired by habituation. Grasping such a complex relation is the precondition of comparing these two methods.

Mediacy and immediacy

One striking fact is that Hegel himself does not acknowledge that he adds this inherently subjective standard to the object of cognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the “Introduction” to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the latter part (Chinese version, pp. 57–62) is devoted to “The System’s Method of Presentation” of this science, which is mainly for the sake of eliminating the “false image” of separation between the standard of the investigation and the object of the investigation. Hegel first presents a contradiction: if science investigates apparent knowledge, it “seems incapable of taking place without some kind of presupposition which underlies it as a *standard*.”¹ However, at this point, science itself has yet to come into being, so where did this preexisting standard taken as reliable come from? Science is born from the investigation of apparent knowledge, but if science does not have a scientific standard it again cannot come into being—this is a paradox. In the view of the materialist dialectic, this paradox can only be resolved in the course of humankind’s sensuous practical activity from the scientific activity and history of science born from this. This is therefore not a purely scientific problem in essence, but a problem that goes beyond scientific concepts and involves the field of values. Just as Marx states: sensuousness (see Feuerbach) must be the ground of all science. Science must proceed solely from the two forms of sensuousness, sensuous consciousness and sensuous needs, and therefore it must proceed from Nature for it to be true science.² However, in Hegel’s case, the problem depends entirely on the identity between our investigation and the object of this investigation, that is, the same abstract consciousness or self-consciousness. I set consciousness as the object in this investigation, which means that my consciousness is the object of itself, then any standard presented by myself (my consciousness) must be that provided by consciousness itself. So if there is any standard when I analyze consciousness, that is exactly what the object of analysis—consciousness—posits by itself. It is not that “I” am analyzing consciousness; rather, it is that consciousness is (though it is my consciousness at this time) analyzing itself: “we have the standard which consciousness itself sets up to measure its knowing.”³ Thus, Hegel reminds us:

But what is essential throughout the whole investigation is to hold fast to this, that both of these moments, concept and object, being-for-another and being-in-itself, themselves fall within the knowing that we are investigating, and that we thus do not need to bring standards with us and in the investigation to apply our ideas and thoughts. By leaving these aside, we succeed in considering the matter at issue as it is in and for itself.⁴

The knowing (the standard) and the object of knowing are two moments of the same “knowing itself,” two moments making up a self-enclosed substance. But in this way, although Hegel assumes that he is not bringing along any

standard beforehand and is only “objectively” examining consciousness as object, he (or we should say his “consciousness,” which is the same thing) does effectively bring into the picture a standard, namely my investigating consciousness is identical to the consciousness that is investigated by me. In other words, it is the same abstract, universal consciousness (because if one of them were sensuous consciousness, they would not then be identical but would be distinct). Thus, knowledge of this consciousness could only be abstract, general knowledge and what it ultimately attains is nothing but the abstract identity of I=I.

However, Hegel also saw that this consciousness is still different from the consciousness of our everyday experience, which rather always involves the consciousness of objective objects outside of consciousness: “Yet precisely because consciousness knows of an object at all, there is already present the difference that something is, to consciousness, the *in-itself*, but another moment is knowing.”⁵ Hegel believes that this difference is precisely the possibility and necessity of the cognizing consciousness investigating cognized consciousness. We say possibility, because assuming there were no difference at all, one could not possibly turn the other into an object for consideration. We say necessity, because the investigation is for the sake of eliminating this superficial difference step by step so as to make the two ultimately attain identity after undergoing a process. If there were originally no difference at all, this process would have no need to proceed. Thus, the investigation of consciousness in his view is a process of continually absorbing the object that is beyond consciousness, the object to which consciousness refers, into consciousness itself at various different levels, a process of proving that it is essentially consciousness itself positing the object and continually eliminating and disproving that object which consciousness first misunderstood as alien to itself. Therefore, it is a process of consciousness generating a new, true object, one that is identical with consciousness itself.⁶ In the last chapter of the *Logic*, “The Absolute Idea,” there are two passages that could be seen as referring to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

The method is this knowing itself, for which the concept is not only as subject matter but is as its own subjective act, the *instrument* and the means of cognitive activity, distinct from this activity and yet the activity’s own essentiality.⁶

At the beginning of finite cognition universality is likewise recognized as an essential determination, but only as thought—and concept determination in opposition to being.⁷

He recognizes that the standard that consciousness uses in this process happens to change as well, but in effect, he insists that this change is nothing more than one of increase in the degree of abstraction of this abstract consciousness, one of using consecutively higher-level categories within the scope of abstract consciousness and abstract concept, and such a system of abstract categories

(system of standards) is overall still prepared beforehand and brought into the investigation without ever being demonstrated for the sake of being able to driving the sensuous and the empirical out from knowledge, putting the sensuous and the empirical out of consideration or dissolving the sensuous in the abstract universals at each level and in each different shape of consciousness, so as to ultimately attain "absolute knowledge" that has been purified of any admixture. Hegel insists that this passage is a description of the empirical science of consciousness, but is at the same time the formative movement and historical genesis of a true science of spirit.

Therefore, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the mediation of non-identity between the subjective standard of the investigator and the object investigated (consciousness) become moments of the dialectical movement of showing the immediacy of their identity. He superficially investigates conscious experience, but what he actually investigates is this investigation itself. It seems as if he is "empirically" discovering and nurturing the form of the investigation itself through conscious experience, but the form of this investigation is, however, transcendently established in the investigation. For instance, in the chapter "Sensuous-Certainty," he "finds" such concepts as being, non-being and movement, but in his view these concepts are all "universals," and after those sensuous objects that they mean are eliminated as "non-essence" and "impermanent," sensuous-certainty becomes a subjectively unsayable "meant." When what was meant is placed out of consideration for being unsayable, what remains of sensuous-certainty is reduced to a universal stripped of all concrete content, an isolated "language," an empty word, which, after getting the motivation of self-movement from sensuous consciousness casts these sensuous consciousnesses aside to undertake pure categorial deduction. At this point, it is no longer the being, non-being and movement of the sensuous itself, but is rather merely the abstract knowledge or concept of being, non-being and movement (becoming), because in his view, knowledge is consciousness's only objective reference (as Marx saw it).⁷ In Hegel's formulation, this categorial deduction is not so much the conclusion of undergoing scientific abstraction in empirical consciousness as it is taken from the system of logical categories ready-made, which is the abstract movement of "being-nothing-becoming." Clearly, although Hegel's *Phenomenology* was completed before his *Logic*, without the construction of a considerably mature logical system, his *Phenomenology* could never have been established. He himself said in the Preface to the *Logic*: the conscious movement of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* "rests exclusively on the nature of the pure essentialities that constitute the content of logic."⁸ In this sense, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is viewed on the one hand as a path to true scientific knowledge, a process of forming "pure knowledge," but on the other hand, it is also "absolute knowledge" that has been completed recalling its own journey. Through this recollection, the abstract concept becomes the one and only substance and subject rendering identical within itself all mediation and immediacy, standard and object, subjective and objective.

If Hegel's understanding of analysis and synthesis were used as the conceptual standards for gauging the method of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,

then we could openly call it analytic, because it is the dismembering of a completely intact object (like “sensuous-certainty”) (a dismembering of it into singular “meant(s)” and universal “this’s”); it eliminates the things (meanings) within it without value (without certainty); it continually removes (what remains of the illusion of the “this” along with the vestiges of the supra-sensory world that remain after removing the layers of “appearance” from “the thing itself”), that is, until the result is reached where empirical consciousness has gradually stripped itself of all empirical admixture and attains “pure knowing.” The synthetic method, which is inseparably bound up with this open form of the analytic method is only understood at the level of potential and is only discovered after the fact, which is to say, after the process culminates, we may turn our head back, recollect and find that this process of analysis was effectively one of the substantial tendency (that is, the total goal of the entire process of consciousness—knowing the truth, making the object correspond to the concept) guiding the progression of consciousness from lower to higher levels all along, absorbing in orderly fashion all possible shapes of consciousness into this common goal and actualizing it.

In sharp contrast, at the beginning of the *Science of Logic*, the investigator could not have any subjective standard, but must immediately face his object, which is taken to be a self-evident and self-explanatory presupposition. All that needs to be explained is how this can be done, for, unlike the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, although the entire building of pure knowledge has not yet been established here, the site of this building has been cleared (by the *Phenomenology of Spirit*). No one needs to get caught up and entangled in subjective empirical consciousness any longer, for they already have the “purely thinking” attitude of the objective investigator. What remains to be done is to see what the first category of pure thought is that emerges in this attitude. Of course, as the categories are investigated one after another in the order of appearance, this state akin to a blank slate (a tabula rasa that, however, is artificially wiped clean) is immediately smashed to pieces and we finally realize that the investigator had a standard and a method all along in the “absolute Idea.” He unconsciously uses the method when investigating the contents, so this potential method becomes self-conscious investigation in the absolute Idea. All of this shows that in the *Logic*, that superficial attitude of the spectator or of immediate acceptance is actually not so immediate, but implicitly contains mediation and the split between standard and object. This structure of the *Logic* is the perfect inverse of that of the *Phenomenology* in which the relationship is superficially that of mediation, that is, opposition between standard and object, but it implicitly contains consciousness’s immediate relation of self-identity (which only becomes explicitly conscious at the conclusion of “absolute Knowledge”). As Gadamer points out:

In the *Phenomenology* this scientific advance occurs as a movement back and forth between that which our consciousness believes and that which

is actually implied in what it says. Thus, we always find a contradiction between what we want to say and what we actually have said. We are continuously compelled to abandon what proved insufficient and to again set about saying what we mean. Herein consists the method of the *Phenomenology* by which it progresses to its goal, namely to the insight that knowledge properly exists only where that which we believe and that which is are no longer different in any way.⁹

Considering the relationship between analysis and synthesis, we could also view the method of the *Logic* as synthetic in open arrangement, because it demonstrates from the very beginning that the formation of all opposites and all “others” is a process of the same thing reverting back to itself, where the progression of thought is not increasingly simple and pure (as in the *Phenomenology*) but increasingly complex, plentiful and concrete; it constitutes a synthetic unity. So when the *Phenomenology* reaches “absolute knowledge,” Hegel asserts: “Science contains within itself this necessity to relinquish itself of the form of the pure concept and to make the transition from the concept into consciousness.”¹⁰ Marx also compares these two approaches in the introduction to *Critique of Political Economy*: “The first procedure attenuates meaningful images to abstract definitions, the second leads from abstract definitions by way of reasoning to the reproduction of the concrete situation.”¹¹ These are actually the methodological characteristics of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (the first path) and of the *Science of Logic* (the second path). As the method for establishing a scientific (*Political Economy*) system, Marx advocates for the synthetic method of the *Science of Logic*:

The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation [*Anschauung*] and conception.¹²

Of course, this is also not to deny that when the purpose is not to establish a scientific system but to investigate a concrete object, the analytic method (i.e. that of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*) is perfectly legitimate.¹³ Effectively, the immediacy of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the mediation of the *Science of Logic* complement one another methodologically speaking.

On the other hand, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we owe the separation and opposition (mediation) of standard and object to Hegel immediately seizing the unexamined standard from the *Logic* (This standard is only investigated “after the fact”). Similarly, in the *Science of Logic*, we owe that presuppositionless immediacy of the beginning solely to the possibility given to it by the end result of the *Phenomenology* (thanks to mediation). “Logic has for its presupposition the science of spirit in its appearance, a science

which contains the necessity, and therefore demonstrates the truth, of the standpoint which is pure knowledge and of its mediation.”¹⁴ For this reason Hegel’s claim that there is nothing that does not at the same time contain both immediacy and mediacy is not as simple as it may seem at first glance; it covers the dialectical structure of each difference between immediacy and mediacy, and we cannot see the *Logic* and the *Phenomenology* as reciprocally related or parallel for simultaneously covering these two moments. We have no choice but to investigate in detail. In this way, we could clarify the problem we brought up earlier, which is: is it the method of the *Phenomenology* which emulates that of the *Logic*, or does that of the *Logic* have for its model the *Phenomenology*’s?

Both are the case, but they mean different things. When we say the *Phenomenology of Spirit* models itself on the *Science of Logic*, what we are referring to is the purely logical meaning, that is, in terms of abstract essence, or in other words, the *Phenomenology* prescribes and formulates the phenomenal movement of empirical consciousness on the basis of those logical categorical connections that were formally articulated in the *Logic* later on. When we say the *Logic* is modeled on the *Phenomenology*, we are then referring to the historical significance of the empirical. That is, the *Phenomenology* provides the empirical precedent for the *Logic* exhibiting the movement of categories in pure conceptual form. As he himself states: “In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, I have presented an example of this method with respect to a concrete object, namely consciousness.”¹⁵ These two aspects, namely that of logic and that of the history of the empirical, are essentially one and the same to him. The principle that the logical is consistent with the historical is an extremely important one that Hegel consciously implements in these two works (and others), which we will have the opportunity to discuss later. As Marx argues, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the true point of origin and secret of Hegel’s philosophy, even though he is speaking to another problem on another level, since as we have already stated, this is not said in reference to Hegel’s understanding of himself, but is a critical analysis from outside of Hegel’s thought. What it means is Hegel’s abstract, logical thinking, that is, absolute thinking, is nothing but the thinking of a philosopher who thinks abstractly.

We may derive from this presentation that, owing to the different modes of construction with mediacy and immediacy respectively, the nature of the arguments in the *Phenomenology* and that of those in the *Logic* have one marked difference, which is: the former unfolds as the path of doubt, which could be seen as one continuous string of “disproof”; the latter unfolds as the same thing continually “proving” itself true, which is “the path of truth.”

“The path of doubt” and “the path of truth”

In the “Introduction” to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in addition to the problem of the “standard” of cognition, another important problem that

Hegel discusses is the relationship between truth and error (see pages 51–57 in the Chinese version; there is also a special paragraph in the “Introduction” discussing “truth and falsehood” (from page 23 of the Chinese translation onward). In this regard, Hegel begins the discussion by criticizing Kant, who believes that to ensure that cognition does not make mistakes, we must first check the instruments of cognition before cognizing. Hegel objects to viewing cognition as mediating instrument or medium, holding that such a view regards cognition and object of cognition as absolutely separate and falsely in the name of avoiding error; it blocks the path to knowing the truth, “an assumption through which that which calls itself the fear of error gives itself away to be known rather as the fear of truth.”¹⁶ Hegel advocates immediately immersing oneself in that knowledge that is present as appearance, that is, beginning from natural consciousness. The path of natural consciousness is that toward the development of true knowledge but which is not itself real knowing,

[b]ut while it immediately regards itself rather as real knowing, this path has negative meaning for it, and what is the realization of the concept will count instead, to it, as the loss of itself, for on this path, it loses its truth. This path can accordingly be regarded as the path of doubt.¹⁷

Therefore, before the *Phenomenology* attains “absolute knowledge” at the very end, it is through and through the path of doubt, which disproves each and every one of those contents of truth in consciousness, but what it gets at the end is something entirely different from natural consciousness. Yet, Hegel also makes the distinction between the path of doubt and what is ordinarily called doubt, that is, Cartesian doubt, which does not quite get beyond natural consciousness; it is “a shaking of this or that supposed truth, followed by the disappearance again of the doubt, and then a return to the former truth so that in the end the thing at issue is taken as it was before.”¹⁸ What is different from the past is that these truths, which were postulated by an authority outside of me, are now grounded in personal confidence and “resolve” (i.e., I think, therefore I am). This does not in the slightest bit change the content of these supposed truths. Conversely, Hegel’s doubt is the “full history of the cultivation of consciousness itself into science,” that thoroughgoing skepticism, which doubts all natural consciousness including personal “determination” or “resolve.” “[T]his path is the conscious insight into the untruth of knowing as it appears.” It doubts the entirety of that which is present as apparent “consciousness” or knowledge, because only in this way can spirit get better at recognizing the truth.¹⁹

On the other hand, this skepticism is also different from ancient (for instance, Pyrrhonian) skepticism, in that ancient “skepticism [...] sees in the result always only pure nothing and [...] abstracts from the fact that this nothing is determinately the nothing of that from which it results.”²⁰ In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

It can be noted in general at the outset that the exposition of non-truthful consciousness in its untruth is not a merely negative movement [...] By contrast, while the result is grasped as it is in truth, as determinate negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation, the transition is made whereby the progression through the complete series of shapes comes about on its own accord.²¹

In other words, negating an untruthful consciousness, this is to by itself affirm another form of consciousness that is held to be true (otherwise, how could the prior consciousness be untrue?), and when this other consciousness exposes its own falsity and is therefore negated, a transition is made to a newer form of consciousness—this shapes a process of development in which that standard of total truthfulness is the ultimate goal it aims to attain, namely, when “the concept corresponds to the object and the object to the concept,” or rather, when thinking and being are identical. This supreme goal disintegrates everything in the course of consciousness, but it does not obliterate these shapes of consciousness from the outside. Rather, it releases a violent force from within consciousness itself, which “brings to ruin its own restricted satisfaction.”²²

A defect of empirical consciousness is found, apparently, in the failure to attain identity between cognition and object, which makes up the very negativity of empirical consciousness itself, but this negativity is simultaneously the “soul or driver” of the bidirectional movement of cognition and object. Hence, this negativity is the soul or driver of the entire course of empirical conscious movement. This driving force comes from nowhere else but that truthful substance behind empirical consciousness, that substance which acts as subject not only at the tail end of the process when the ultimate goal or destination is attained, but also at the very beginning of the *Phenomenology*; it merely removes that final veil covering the face at the very end and that is all. Therefore, although phenomenology is indeed the path of doubt, it has already indirectly shown the progression of truth itself. “What seems to take place outside of the substance, to be an activity directed against it, is its own doing, and substance shows that it is essentially subject.”²³ Truth, that is, substance, is a process, not “minted coin,” which is to say, truth takes shape and shines forth through a series of errors, and precisely for this reason, Hegel affirms without hesitation: “this path to science is itself already science, and according to its content it is thereby the science of the experience of consciousness.”²⁴ However, this is only said with respect to its form of necessity. With respect to those contents of empirical consciousness that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* supplies, Hegel insists they are all unworthy of the term “scientific knowledge” and should rather be called a series of errors that only host the subjective desire to become truthful without the power to bring themselves to the truth. So, even though truth and error are interlinked:

It cannot be said that the false constitutes a moment or even a constituent part of the true. Take the saying that “In every falsehood, there is

something true”—in this expression both of them are regarded as oil and water, which cannot mix and are only externally combined.²⁵

The truth is the substance that is hidden underneath the appearances of empirical consciousness; it guides the phenomenal appearances of consciousness to itself. When it fully displays itself, it is no longer appearances of consciousness but pure thought, that is, logic. In other words, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* becomes the truth's outer shell, which it has already shed. Hegel therefore argues, the true and the false as linguistic expressions “must no longer be employed in the instances where their otherness has been sublated.”²⁶ When we first set out on this path of the empirical science of consciousness at the very beginning, we could, and moreover, we had no other choice but to view each shape of consciousness now as true, and then sublate it as false; but after real “absolute knowledge” and “pure truth” shine forth, we must no longer call those shapes of consciousness of the *Phenomenology* either true or false, because if we say of one that it is true, that is not referring to itself but only to the logical truth of “absolute knowledge” that it envelops and conceals (for instance, the category of “being” enveloped in “sensuous-certainty”). If we say of one that it is false, that is only referring to its understanding of itself being false, but this understanding is precisely that which it itself negates; it displays a necessary tendency to make the transition toward truth. The *Phenomenology* by itself is only the intermediary between falsehood and truth; it still is not a moment of the truth, but is merely a preparatory stage of the truth; it wishes to become a moment of truth, which will not happen until after the positing of “Pure Truth,” the *Science of Logic*, where it passes through the “Philosophy of Nature” and returns back into the “Philosophy of Spirit,” at which point it again pops up in the “Subjective Spirit” under the name the “Phenomenology of Spirit,” where “the false as the false is no longer a moment of truth.”²⁷ Why is it no longer “as the false?” In Hegel's view, it is merely thanks to the positing of the *Science of Logic*, which shrouds all things false under the halo of the “Absolute Idea” and enables their “souls” to get saved. The false can only rely on “the absolute concept” to become a moment of truth: “that as this material appears outside and before the concept, it has no truth but that it has it only in its ideality or in its identity with the concept.”²⁸ This once again exposes the “secret” of speculative philosophy, that is, the speculative philosopher externalizes the subjective abstract concept as absolute objective knowledge through the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and then “nevertheless again confirms it in this alienated shape and passes it off as his true mode of being.”²⁹ The shadow of Christian “salvation” is obviously visible here.

Now let us take a look at the *Science of Logic*. If the *Phenomenology of Spirit* presents in Hegel the path of doubting and disproving as false, then the *Science of Logic* does just the opposite, presenting rather the path of truth, the path of continually proving true:

However much in the phenomenology of spirit, each moment is both the difference between knowing and truth and the movement in which that difference sublates itself, nonetheless science does not, in contrast, contain this difference and its sublation. Rather, as the moment has the form of the concept, it unites the objective form of truth and that of the knowing self into an immediate unity. The moment does not come on the scene as this movement of passing to and fro from consciousness, or from representational thought, into self-consciousness and then back again; rather, the pure shape liberated from its appearance in consciousness, the pure concept and its further forward movement, depend solely on its pure determinateness.³⁰

In the “Introduction” to the *Science of Logic*, Hegel also insists, “pure science” is far from being formal:

It is its content which alone has absolute truth [...] Accordingly, logic is to be understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. This realm is truth unveiled, truth as it is in and for itself [...] It can therefore be said that this content is the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit.³¹

However, Hegel stands in opposition to the traditional understanding of “logic.” Formal logic and even Kant’s “transcendental logic” are equally characterized by a formal framework that is both extrinsic and static; “the need for a reformation of logic has long been felt.”³² “For the dead bones of logic to be quickened by spirit and become substance and content, its method must be the one which alone can make it fit to be pure science.”³³ In Hegel’s view, logic is the realm of truth, but this realm of truth is no heavenly kingdom of eternal rest; it is a process, which, unlike that of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is not a process of human consciousness gradually forming knowledge about the truth, but is rather one of the truth itself forming, revealing and constituting a system. It is not, of course, that everything in this process rests in pure light and pure affirmation without one bit of negativity (which would preclude processing). Precisely to the contrary, this process is entirely a process of negation (identical with the *Phenomenology*); it is only that this negation is at the same time also positive, a “determinate negation”; it does not dissolve into abstract nothing without any result whatsoever, nor does it continually go to where other negatives are to find positive results; rather, there is a result already inside of itself, which is to contain what is negated by it in itself:

It is a new concept but one higher and richer than the preceding—richer because it negates or opposes the preceding and therefore contains it, and it contains even more than that, for it is the unity of itself and its opposite.³⁴

In other words, this kind of negation does not disprove what it contains one by one (as in the *Phenomenology*), but instead proves the truth by a way that is unique to it, and this special way is unlike run-of-the-mill positivism, which proves the truthfulness of an object with some truer, or rather, some self-evident ground external to it; it does it the other way around; it points out the flaws of an object. Rather, it exposes its self-contradiction and shows how it negates itself, which makes it split off another from within itself that stands in opposition to itself; then, it describes how this other is still the other of itself, its own other, that is, a product of its own self-differentiation. Therefore, its own opposition and contradiction with this differentiated product of itself by no means vanquishes it, but helps it actualize itself at a higher level, enriches it on a higher level and proceeds to verify and prove the rationality and necessity of the stage it is at along with the potential it harbors within itself. Therefore, the entire process, although differently, manifests as the elapsing of a series of categories that develop; it is the unfolding of one and the same thing. This unfolding is both the process of one and the same truth and at the same time the pure method itself, speculative logic itself.

We can also understand therefrom why Hegel always says, when discussing the evolving succession of categories in the *Logic*, that the “truth” of some category is another category, or rather, some category is “truly” another category (for instance, the truth of being and nothing is becoming, essence is the truth of being etc.). The final category of the *Logic*, “the absolute Idea,” is then the truth of all of the categories; what it proves true is not outside of the first category “being,” but is rather precisely the proof of “being” itself; it makes known that “being” is the total system of logical method, in which all is simple and purified without anything superfluous or redundant, without anything defective or insufficient. Here, the variety of categories composes an organic, transparent, living whole. So, this path of truth is the path of one and the same truth verifying itself; what follows proves the truth of what precedes it, but what follows is at the same time the self-deepening of what precedes it. What precedes is already truth, but in what follows it is the deepening of this truth, the enriching and specifying of this truth; it turns back into what precedes it as the truth of what precedes it. In other words, it is the increasingly concrete clarification of the truthfulness of what precedes it, so the whole process could be seen as a process of clarification as well. The object of clarification is one and the same truth, but this truth is still abstract and empty before it is clarified or undergoes the clarification; it can only become enriched with concrete content and come into possession of that necessity which can convince people by undergoing clarification. It is thus proven truthful. There is only one thing: we should not consider this clarification as external to it, but should see it as that logical Idea, as the true thing in-itself or substance, clarifying itself, which is to say as the self-demonstration of the logical Idea.

Of course, Hegel also frequently mentions “the truth” even as early as in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For instance:

[sensuous-certainty's] truth is [...] in *what I mean*.³⁵
[t]he universal is the truth of sensuous-certainty.³⁶

Thus, with self-consciousness we have now entered into the native realm of truth.³⁷

However, as we stated previously, these formulations are merely temporary ones for the certainty belonging to appearances of consciousness. In Hegel's view, in the true realm of truth, that is, before the *Science of Logic* founds it and the truth is grasped, the "veracity" belonging to the appearance of consciousness is only superficial, temporary and passing; we should say rather that none of them have any truth at all. The progression of the entire *Phenomenology* is but "disproving" each and every certainty and veracity one by one. On the other hand, to say they have "truth" also makes sense, which is that the successive sublation of each and every shape of consciousness exhibits an internal logical necessity to bring the truth into being, and this necessary logic is at work "behind" these shapes of consciousness; it only manifests itself in pure form in the *Science of Logic*. Therefore, when we "recall" the progression of the *Phenomenology* after grasping the essence of the *Logic*, we can make out the progression of the truth from the disproving as such (and not from the appearances that are disproven). That is, we can make out the great force of logic present in a concrete science. So, there is a profound difference (however unnoticed) between the veracity or "truth" of which Hegel speaks in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and similar formulations found in the *Science of Logic*.

The linguistic lever and the existential lever

We already know that language became the lever of thought's progression in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in general and at the beginning of it in particular. Sensuous-certainty is what is meant precisely because it is sub-linguistic; its plentiful and vivid implications are therefore sublated with language, the universal, the concept as its truth. In the presentation that follows, even without explicitly mentioning language, when Hegel touches on "the universal," "universal medium," "the form of the concept" and even on "certainty," we will always think of the fact that he always posits their ground as language from the very beginning and pins their function of negating and sublating meaning and sensuous things on language's mysterious "inverting" power. Gadamer calls the doctrine of "the inverted world" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the hardest passage and core of the entire book, but he never tracks down the source of this inversion. He merely makes a few descriptions judging the case as it stands. We can likewise see this role of language in the *Science of Logic*. Hegel says in the preface to the second edition:

The forms of thought are first set out and stored in human language. In everything that the human being has interiorized, in everything that

in some way or other has become for him a representation, in whatever he has made his own, there has language penetrated, and everything that he transforms into language and expresses in it contains a category, whether concealed, mixed, or well defined. It is to the advantage of a language when it possesses a wealth of logical expressions, that is, distinctive expressions specifically set aside for thought determinations.³⁸

When demonstrating the passage back and forth into one another of being and nothing, he also exercises the leverage of language for the sake of eliminating any thought determinations coming from the outside and making the transition to “immediacy”: “Taken in its immediacy, being belongs to a subject, is something said, has an empirical existence in general, and therefore stands on a ground of restriction and negativity.”

It is the same case for nothing:

When taken in its immediacy, nothing shows itself as existing; for it is by nature the same as being. Nothing is thought of, represented; it is spoken about; it therefore is; nothing has its being in thinking, representing, speaking [...] It shows itself in combination with or, if one prefers, in touch with a being, unseparated from a being, that is to say, precisely in a determinate existence.³⁹

In the *Lesser Logic*, Hegel also returns to the presentation of language's meaning-transcending universality in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁴⁰

However, in general, Hegel's attitude toward language in the *Science of Logic* is different from that found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The difference is that the *Logic* mainly focuses on the refining and processing of language to make it rise above the standards of everyday use, to advance from self-consciousness (natural thought) to philosophical thought. Wolfgang Wieland argues, the *Logic* requires truth but not the concreteness of factual language, and similarly, the *Logic* is not doing abstractions on the basis of natural language and it does not describe the origination of its forms as if logical categories only come into being from such a process.⁴¹ The first part sounds correct, but the second part is problematic. What he means to say is: the presupposition under which Hegel analyzes language is the “end” of the Absolute Idea, which he possesses transcendently. But I think, this “transcendental” presupposition of the Absolute Idea still owes its secret origin to language. The Idea is *logos*, that is, refined language. Language is not merely an auxiliary tool for understanding logic but is rather the source of logic itself. Such refining is not like that “artificial language” found in modern language analysis; it does not put everyday language aside and build another “ideal” language, but rather extracts materials for philosophical language directly from everyday language, then clarifies them and situates those conceptual categories used in language originally in isolated and fragmentary fashion within an organic system of demonstrating one another and explaining one another,

thereby giving them philosophical meaning. Philosophy, therefore, stands in no need of special terminology.⁴²

Therefore, inasmuch as the *Science of Logic* deals with the thought determinations that instinctively and unconsciously pervade our spirit everywhere—and remain non-objectified and unnoticed even when they enter language it will also be a reconstruction of those determinations which reflection has already abstracted and fixed as subjective forms external to a material content.⁴³

In this excavation of language, Hegel pays particular attention to grammar. This is also a feature that distinguishes it from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which Hegel only pays attention to words. Hegel compares grammar to logic and advocates discovering the spirit of logic by comparing the grammars of various languages:

He who is beginning to make his acquaintance with grammar finds in its forms and laws dry abstractions, arbitrary rules, quite in general a disconnected aggregate of definitions that have no other value or meaning than what they immediately signify; at the start [...] On the other hand, he who has mastered a language and is also acquainted with other languages with which to compare it, to such is given the capacity to feel in the grammar of the language the spirit and culture of a people; the same rules and forms now have an enriched, living value. In the medium of the language, he can recognize the expression of spirit as spirit, and this is logic.⁴⁴

In contrast, the linguistic spirit of *logos* still finds itself at the stage of being in-itself or in the phase of being within the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where it manifests as natural consciousness and natural language; in the *Science of Logic* however it already finds itself at the stage of being for-itself or of essence, and it manifests as philosophical consciousness and logical language (grammar) through reflection. This distinction following logically from the different objects of investigation that the two works have. Only the *Logic*'s unearthing and reforming of language truly show the essence of the ancient Greek spirit of *logos*, because even though the ancient Greek word *logos* by itself means language, this is not everyday natural language we are talking about, but a natural and human law that has been objectified. In Heraclitus, all things come into being because of this *logos*, which is "fate" or "god." *Logos* had ontological implications and became the research object of metaphysics. But it nonetheless has its linguistic origin at the end of the day. Previously, we called it an "ideal language," which contains plentiful allusions, but as the standard and rule, in having the instrumental function, like grammar, of expressing abstract relations, it became an unbreakable necessary law. Thus, by the time of Aristotle, it was immediately understood as "formula" and

“definition.” Hegel’s reflection on language is actually a recovering and promoting of this ancient tradition.

Though in no sense a linguistic purist, Hegel, in seeking to overcome the estranged language of *die Schulmetaphysic*, in suffusing its foreign phrases and artificial expressions with the concepts of ordinary thought, succeeded in recovering the speculative spirit of his native tongue for the speculative movement of his philosophizing, and thereby restored a way of doing philosophy which is the natural inheritance from the first Greek thinkers.⁴⁵

Hegel himself felt that unless a people come to know what is most outstanding in their own language, they will never truly inherit the wealth of that language and will remain stuck in barbarism. So he set himself the task of teaching philosophy how to speak German.⁴⁹ Obviously, language in the *Logic* is different from that in the *Phenomenology*; it does not constitute the lever over the thinking process but becomes the object of refinement, the material of thought. In it, words themselves play a role that seems empty, narrow; it easily gives one the feeling that two opposite words (like being and nothing) are strictly opposed and mutually exclusive and that it fails to express the internal identity of the two sides of the opposition.⁴⁶ All of the categories in the *Science of Logic* are themselves words that have been refined, and so are words that reveal their essentiality, language as linguistic and not language as instrumental. Language is not the means here but the end, the crux of the matter, the thing in-itself. In other words, the *Science of Logic* is related to language itself by way of immediate identity. Inversely, the object of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is not language but consciousness, which in one respect depends on a singular meaning to sublate itself and in another respect depends on language to express its own certainty. It is in this sense that language constitutes the lever over *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. The *Science of Logic* begins where the *Phenomenology of Spirit* concludes. The *Science of Logic* has already sublated language’s leveraging function, that is, the function of mediating, and immediately begins from what is certain.

Closer inspection reveals that what constitutes the lever and driving force of the thinking process in the *Science of Logic* is not the form of language, a universal determination or universals as such, but an internal existential impetus, which is to negate. While the task of the *Phenomenology* is mostly to find genuine certainty, the task of the *Science of Logic* is to obliterate certainty through certainty’s negation of itself and thereby enrich said certainty and turn it into veracity or the truth. We once analyzed the first syllogistic progression of “being, nothing, becoming” at the beginning of the *Science of Logic*. Now we can see that “being” is the first immediate certainty, while “nothing” is the obliteration of this certainty. The certainty of being was ready-made; it did require finding it, but it contained in itself nothing, negation. Now, this nothing, this negation also contains its own negation, the negation of

itself, and so passes over into “becoming,” that is, a more determined and certified being. It is just that the word “truth” only emerges for the first time in this “becoming,” not amid being or not-being,⁴⁷ and negativity is always the active force within this process of becoming. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe calls the devil Mephisto in *Faust* “the spirit of negation” and rewrites the biblical phrase “in the beginning was the word (*logos*)” so that it reads “in the beginning there was the deed (*die Tat*).” In similar fashion, Hegel also says in the *Science of Logic*: “Thus even in God quality carries essentially the determination of the negative: activity, creation, power, and so forth, are the bringing forth of an other.”⁴⁸ Both of their understandings of this originary role of negation are perfectly consistent. This is not to say that the action or deed (*Tat*) of negation drives *logos* (or in China, *dao*) as an outside force acting upon it, but is instead to say that *dao* (or *logos*) is effectively acting or doing; it contains acting and doing within itself; acting or doing constitutes its essence. God in the Bible creates the world with the word (*logos*): “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”⁵³ This means, for Hegel: God is himself mind (*nous*) manifesting as logic (*logos*). God is reason and spirit, full of creativity, but his actual creating, this very activity of God creating, is a process of him relinquishing the world from himself by negating himself by force of the negative in himself. The word (*logos*) is the deed. The saying (*logos*) is by itself the doing. *Dao* is nothing other than the way of the negative, the determinacy or the certainty or the law of the negative; therefore, the deed of saying is the affirmation of negation itself and negation is the soul of *dao*. Therefore, *dao* or *logos* is what is said (language), what possesses certainty, which is itself differentiating from itself and negating by itself.

Hegel thus says on one hand at the beginning of the *Science of Logic*: “This indeterminateness or abstract negation which thus has being in it is that to which reflection, gives voice when it equates such a being with nothing.”⁴⁹ On the other hand, he also insists on the need to “state” the determination: “The challenge to produce the distinction between being and nothing also brings with it the challenge to state what, then, is being, and what is nothing.”⁵⁰ Everything that is “unspeakable” in his view is nonexistent or at the very most illusory “opinion” (*Meinung*, that is, “what is meant”). Henceforth, even negation itself is determined: “a negative nothing is however something affirmative.”⁵¹ In other words, only the negative is honored by some kind of true certainty, and only such certainty that undergoes negation (the negation of the negation) is concretely speaking positive. Hegel states in the last chapter of the *Science of Logic*, “The Absolute Idea”: “The Logic thus exhibits the self-movement of the Absolute Idea only as the original word, a word which is an utterance, but one that in being externally uttered has immediately vanished again.”⁵² What Hegel means here is that in the *Science of Logic*, each and every determination of the Absolute Idea at each and every stage has no unchanging certainty, and every time such a determination is linguistically stated, it is immediately negated; only saying or speaking itself as the Idea’s movement, as the completely transparent form, as the method, is the absolute

truth and all-penetrating soul. Hegel calls it "the original word,"⁵³ that is, that language which is a speaking and a doing or that word which is not yet (or will never be) fixed by written words or symbols or by what is said. The *word*, *dao* or *logos* is in this sense nothing other than a *doing* ("to speak" is an act) or a way of acting ("speaking" is a mode of acting); it is God's creation (production). Throughout the entirety of the *Logic*, the crux of the matter is to show this power of the negative and progress by it from one stage to another.

On the other hand, although negation, negativity and the negative relation come up often in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, one striking characteristic is that: In the places where it comes up, negation always emerges as some sort of external reflection, that is, "our" articulation of the journey of consciousness, not as empirical consciousness's own internal impulse. Empirical consciousness is rather forced or led to the negative side of itself, and every empirical consciousness is itself clinging to the certainty of itself and does not want to abandon its own position, which is the case Hegel is communicating: "the emergence of the new object, which presents itself to consciousness without consciousness knowing how this happens to it. It takes place for us, as it were, behind the back of consciousness."⁵⁴ Therefore, from the view of consciousness itself, what becomes the driving force in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is by no means negation but inversion, the magic of the word. Negation is indeed effectively the agency driving the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but only from the view of "our" position of going beyond consciousness and penetrating behind consciousness, which is "our" position insofar as we have philosophical consciousness and have grasped the logical Idea. But this viewpoint as a standard is still only external at this point for the self-understanding of consciousness that is immersed in the empirical, "busy with experience itself": It does not know effectively what it does or it is beyond its awareness; what it assumes it is doing is however being disproven as false and becomes the inverse of itself. If you have not grasped the *Science of Logic* and are not prepared to use this standard to grasp the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, then comprehending the latter is exceedingly difficult.

We may learn from the contrast made in this chapter that active negation and linguistic determination that have undergone reflection (affirmation qua result) amount to the two main levers in Hegel's philosophy: the former presents the existential characteristic of Hegel's philosophy; the latter presents its characteristic of logical reason or that of *logos*. They are stressed in the *Science of Logic* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* respectively, and also pervade these two works at the same time. Moreover, generally speaking, throughout all of Hegel's works, if you wish to investigate Hegel's dialectic, you will always fall prey to misunderstanding if you stick firmly to any one fragmentary side. Modern neo-Hegelians often absolutize the existential side of Hegel's philosophy and turn him into a purely esoteric writer. Other non-rationalist philosophers (like the existentialists) attack the logical reason of Hegel and turn him into an absolutely unbearable rationalist. However, in my view, Hegel's true dialectic is a synthesis of these two. He maintains a

speculative tension, a highly tense relation between these two extremes (this extreme intensification is largely of his own intentional doing). It is for this reason that he still inherently exhibits living vitality to this very day. Separately penetrating into these two sides and clarifying their relation to one another through investigation is a task that remains to be explored, and it is this that we will be attempting in the next two parts.

Notes

- 1 Hegel 2018, 54–5.
- 2 Marx & Engels 1988, 111.
- 3 Hegel 2018, 56.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Hegel 2010, 737.
- 7 Ibid., 738.
- 8 Ibid., 10.
- 9 Gadamer 1976, 15.
- 10 Hegel 2018, 466.
- 11 Marx 1971, para. 57.
- 12 Marx 1973, ch. 1.
- 13 See also (Chen 1984, 333–6).
- 14 Hegel 2010, 47.
- 15 Ibid., 33.
- 16 Hegel 2018, 50.
- 17 Ibid., 52.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid., 53.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Hegel 2018, 57.
- 23 Ibid., 23.
- 24 Ibid., 58.
- 25 Ibid., 24.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid., 24–5.
- 28 Hegel 2010, 522.
- 29 Marx & Engels 1988, 158.
- 30 Hegel 2018, 465.
- 31 Hegel 2010, 31.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid., 34.
- 34 Ibid., 33.
- 35 Hegel 2018, 63.
- 36 Ibid., 62.
- 37 Ibid., 102.
- 38 Hegel 2010, 12.
- 39 Ibid., 77.

40 Hegel 1991, 50.

41 Wieland 1977, 395–414.

42 Hegel 2010, 12.

43 Ibid., 19.

44 Ibid., 36.

45 Gadamer 1976, 31

46 Hegel 2010, 74.

47 Hegel 1991, 195.

48 Hegel 2010, 62.

49 Ibid., 74.

50 Ibid., 68.

51 Ibid., 78.

52 Ibid., 736.

53 Ibid.

54 Hegel 2018, 58.

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